

THE LAND
of
MYSTERY

CLEVELAND
MOFFETT



THE
LAND OF MYSTERY

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The Strangest Spot on Earth.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

BY

CLEVELAND MOFFETT

Author of "Careers of Danger and Daring," "Through
the Wall," "The Battle," etc.

*With sixty-nine illustrations
from paintings and photographs*



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TO MY WIFE
A SOUVENIR OF OUR WONDERFUL
HORSEBACK RIDE FROM
JERUSALEM TO
DAMASCUS

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CHAPTER I

A HOUSE WITHOUT A WINDOW

THROUGH the purple stillness of the night, in the strangest spot on earth, a boy of sixteen and his mother sat on a ledge of grayish brown stone, watching the August moon as it sank redder and redder through a bank of early morning mist, there on the far horizon where the sea of sand met the sky. This ledge of stone, the lowest step of the Great Pyramid, was about as high as a dining-room table, and as long as two city blocks. It was hewn perfectly flat, top and side, save where the stone had crumbled. Two or three feet back of this ledge, rose the second step, exactly like the first, but a little shorter in length. And back of this rose another step, and then another, scores and scores of steps, tiering away upward in a huge mass that narrowed and narrowed, until, far up

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against the velvet stars, it came to a dull point. This point, higher than the highest church steeple, was the meeting-place of the four steep, stone hills of steps that form the four faces of this wonderful pyramid.

“Mother, look!” cried the boy, and he pointed



Pyramids and the desert.

up to a band of opalescent color that had suddenly settled, like a flashing jewel, upon the top-most tip of the world-famous tomb of Cheops.

“Yes, dear,” said the woman, softly. “It’s the dawn. I want you to remember this as long as you live, Harold. There are n’t many American boys who can say that they have sat at the foot of the Great Pyramid and watched the moon set

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and the sun rise. Look there—toward Cairo!”

She rose and turned to the east, where the delicate pink and purple tints of breaking day formed an exquisite background to the white domes and minarets of the distant city.

“Is n’t it beautiful! Is n’t it wonderful!” Mrs. Evans murmured, and her face shone transfigured. It was a face wherein was blended, with a high-bred American beauty, that strength and nobility of soul that comes through fine, womanly achievement, and suffering bravely endured.

“Tell you what we ought to do, Mumsy,” suggested the boy in a matter-of-fact tone. “If you ’ll let me boost you up a few steps, we ’ll get a corking view of good old Egypt and the good old river Nile, ‘drink her down, down, down.’ Only she looks awfully muddy to drink.”

“Harold, have you no reverence?” sighed the lady.

“Excuse me, Mother. You see, I ’m so glad to be off that wobbly steamer. Um-m! It ’s good to be on solid earth again! Besides, I never met a pyramid before.” He laid his arm playfully on her shoulder. “I never met a pyramid, Mumsy, at four in the morning, and—no breakfast, and—I don’t know the right line of talk.”

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Mrs. Evans smiled as she met the gleam in her son's dancing gray eyes.

"Shall I be heroic? Shall I be the great Napoleon? Shall I, Mumsy?"

With an agile leap, Harold sprang to the step above, and struck an attitude. "'Soldiers of the Imperial Guard!'" he declaimed. "'Remember that forty centuries are looking down on you, and'—and keep your hair on! Am I great, Mumsy? Am I?"

"You're a great monkey!" she said; and then, more seriously, "Sit down, dear. I want to talk to you."

Harold's quick ear caught the change in his mother's tone, and he came to her side in half-alarm, his antics all forgotten.

"What is it, little Mother? Tell me." He took her slender hand in his, and patted it fondly. "You seem sort of—sort of sad."

And now, suddenly, began the most momentous hour in Harold Evans's life, the hour that changed him, one might say, from a boy to a man.

Some camels with swarthy drivers lurched across the sandy way, but he barely noticed them. An Arab boy with harsh cries led a flock of goats to a well under neighboring palm-trees, but the

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young American did not see them. The sun, in incredible glory and mystery, crept up over the parched plain, over the rolling yellow waste of Sahara, but Harold scarcely turned to marvel, so absorbed was he in the startling story that his mother was telling him.

“My son,” she began, “I know you have wondered why I sent for you to come over here, all the way from America. I know you did not want to come. You thought it foolish.”

“Not exactly foolish, Mother,” put in the boy, “but, of course, I know we have n’t very much money—that was one of the things Father told me last year when he took me back to America, that a missionary doctor did n’t exactly abound in this world’s goods, and that I must keep down my school expenses as much as I could. Besides, I thought you were coming back to America to be with me. I thought you decided that, Mumsy, after Father—died.” He dropped his voice as he spoke the last word.

“I know, dear, that ’s what I wrote you; that ’s what I meant to do, but—there ’s something I have n’t told you, Harold, about your father. It ’s not bad news, my boy, it ’s good news, blessed news; but I could not write it. I dared not, and if it ’s true, you ’ll see why I could not go to

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America, and why it was necessary that you should come here."

Her voice was broken with emotion.

"Go on," he said. "Please go on. We've got to face this thing together, whatever it is."

"Ah, there is my boy!" the mother cried happily. "Yes, indeed, dear, we will face it together. We are everything to each other, aren't we? And this is a big thing to face—such a wonderfully big thing that—" she paused as if afraid to continue.

The boy stared in half-understanding.

"Mother! You don't mean—you can't mean —" he stammered.

She turned to him with radiant eyes.

"My son, your father is *not* dead."

"Not dead!" he cried.

Harold's mind flashed back to that morning at St. Paul's school about a year before, when the terrible cable had come, forwarded from Constantinople. His father, his brave father, who had given his whole life to helping others, had been killed on his return journey from America, killed mysteriously in this ancient land of Egypt, perhaps by fierce tribesmen in the desert. And now his mother said that this was not true. His father had *not* been killed!

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“Mother, tell me!” begged the boy. “Tell me everything.”

Then, in low words, she told him, and, as Harold listened, he bit his lips, and his boyish frown deepened.

“Let’s go over this again, Mumsy,” he said gently, when she had finished. “Let me tell it. I want to be sure I’ve got it straight.”

And briefly Harold reviewed the story of his father’s disappearance and accepted death the previous August. It was a story that had made a great stir in the missionary world.

For thirty years, Dr. Wicklow Evans had been a picturesque figure in that lawless, blood-stained mountain province of the Turkish sultan known as Anatolia. He was a good American, yet so active had he been, and so much had he found to do in this benighted region, fighting the Asiatic cholera, teaching stupid villagers to save their children from eye diseases, and generally letting his light shine both as a physician and a man, that in this long period he had made only two journeys to his native land, the first seventeen years before, when he had gone home to be married, the second only the previous summer, when he had returned to enter Harold in St. Paul’s school.

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Up to this time (when he was fifteen), all of Harold's life had been spent in Adana, that strange Turkish city lost in the Taurus Mountains, five hundred miles east of Constantinople, five hundred miles west of Bagdad, four hundred miles north of Jerusalem. Here the boy lived the free, wild, missionary life, making long horse-back journeys with his father from village to village, sleeping in caves and mud houses, learning to drive a loaded *araba* (a sort of gipsy wagon) across a mountain torrent, down one steep bank and up another, without ever spilling a spoon, learning to fight wild dogs in the villages, learning to use the sling native fashion—the real David and Goliath article,—knowing the signs of the wild boar and the way of meeting him, picking up the Turkish language, and yet remaining an out-and-out American boy whose greatest pleasure, through long winter evenings, was in reading and re-reading old copies of American magazines under the cheery light of a Rochester lamp, while his mother buzzed a Singer sewing-machine and his father read the weekly *London Times*, and while Nasr-ed-Din chanted dolefully outside the compound walls.

After settling Harold in St. Paul's school, Dr. Evans had returned by way of Marseilles, and

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had written his wife from Alexandria, saying that he would stop over a steamer there, so that he might run up to Cairo and see the Great Pyramid. It had always been one of the doctor's ambitions to explore the mysteries of Cheops. He said he would take the following steamer, three days later, and proceed to Jaffa, and then to Alexandretta, the disembarking port for Adana.

This good news made Mrs. Evans so happy that she immediately set off on the rough horseback journey to Alexandretta, and when the steamer came to anchor and the little boats pulled off, there was the eager wife full of joy at the thought of seeing her husband again, and giving him a pleasant surprise.

But, alas, the doctor was not on board! Nor did the next steamer bring him. Nor did any letter or any word come from him. In vain the distracted wife made effort upon effort. In vain the American consul in Cairo, the American minister in Constantinople, did what they could. Nothing availed. No news of Wicklow Evans was ever received, and as the weeks and months passed, it was generally agreed that this fearless and admirable man had perished, in some sinister way, another victim in the long list of mysterious disappearances, so common in the East,

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where neither the criminal nor the motive are ever brought to light.

“That much is clear, is n’t it?” resumed Harold. “You thought Father was dead. You thought so for months. You went back to Adana to settle up things before returning to America to be with me. You were going to leave this forsaken old land, and—”

“Don’t say that, Harold! It’s the land where your father and I have spent the happiest and most useful years of our lives. It’s the land where you were born, dear.”

“All right, Mumsy. I like the land well enough, barring some of the people, but the point is, you suddenly changed your mind and sent for me to come over here. You would n’t tell me why. You just said come. So I came. And you met me yesterday at the steamer—say, but I was seasick! And we took the train up to Cairo. And we drove straight out to this gorgeous old pyramid. And now you’ve told me this extraordinary thing—this most extraordinary thing. Why do you look at me like that, Mumsy?”

Under stress of emotion the boy had been rattling on nervously, while his mother watched him with sad, understanding eyes.

“Take the basket, Harold,” she said quietly.

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“We ’ll go over to those palm-trees where there ’s shade and water. We ’ll feel better for a little breakfast. Then I ’ll tell you more.”

They crossed the sand in silence, and when the mother spoke again it was to ask a blessing on their simple meal, which was spread on a massive slab of reddish stone that had once been part of the tomb of a forgotten king.

“Bless, O Lord, this food to our use, and us to Thy service”—her voice broke here, and she repeated the words with almost rapturous devotion—“*and us to Thy service, for Christ’s sake. Amen.*”

When they had finished eating, they rested in the shade of the waving palms, and again Mrs. Evans tried to overcome Harold’s doubts.

“I know you see nothing in what I ’ve said, my son,” she began gently. “You think I am deceived.”

Harold hesitated before her searching eyes.

“Well, Mother, it seems as though there is so awfully little to go on. I mean so little that is—er—tangible. You think Father is living because you feel that he is living, but—”

“I *know* he is living,” she breathed. “The truest things are the things you know. We were so close together, your father and I, that—it is n’t

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like America over here—this is a land of mystery.”

“But if Father is living, why has n’t he sent word?” interrupted the boy.

“He has n’t been able to send word. Have you forgotten what I told you?”

“I remember everything, Mother. Father had enemies who wanted to drive him out of Adana, and they threatened him and threatened you, and, at last, they saw their chance, and took him, and now they ’re keeping him a prisoner somewhere. It ’s all right as a story, but we ’ve got nothing to go on. We don’t know *who* carried Father off, or *where* they ’ve got him, or anything about it.”

“We ’re going to know something about it very soon—perhaps to-day,” Mrs. Evans said firmly.

“To-day?”

“My boy, we must have faith. If we ask for guidance, it will be given us. All through this lonely year, I have asked for guidance, and that is why we are here, now, at this Great Pyramid.”

She spoke as one inspired, and Harold looked at her in awe-struck wonder.

“You mean that we may find out something about Father from—from this pyramid?”

“Yes, dear. You know this is the last place

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your father visited and—” Her voice broke and she paused, trying to collect herself.

“But Father’s enemies were n’t here in Egypt, were they? I thought you said they were in Adana?”

“Oh, my boy! you don’t realize the relentless cunning of the Turk! I know that this powerful enemy had your father shadowed everywhere and—” Mrs. Evans glanced fearfully over her shoulder though the brilliant flood of light now pouring across the sandy plain gave no opportunity for eavesdroppers.

“And what? Go on, Mumsy.”

The mother hesitated and then said earnestly: “There are more things in the world than that two and two make four, Harold. I have never been inside this pyramid, but three times during the past year, I have *seen* inside of it.”

“Seen inside of the pyramid! You mean—in a dream?”

“No. It was n’t a dream. I don’t know what it was, but I know it was real; it was true. I saw a stone chamber with a low ceiling, so low that you had to bend your head when you stood up straight.”

“I?” exclaimed the boy. “Did you see *me* in this stone chamber?”

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"As plainly as I see you now. You were holding a candle, and were searching for something near an opening in the wall."

"An opening? What kind of an opening?"

"A small square hole about a foot wide. The wall was polished, and in the middle of the floor there was an immense gray stone, shaped like a trunk, only larger. And on each side of this stone, there were two other stones of the same shape, but smaller."

"Five stones like five big trunks!" mused Harold. "Say, Mumsy, did I find anything—when you saw me in the dream?"

"I don't know, my boy. I only saw you searching."

"And you saw this three times?"

"Three times," she nodded.

"And you know there's a chamber like that inside the Great Pyramid? Nobody ever told you so?"

"No."

"You never saw a picture of it? You never read about it?"

"Never."

"You just know it's there?"

"I just know it's there."

Harold was silent for some moments, his brows

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drawn together in tight perplexity. Then he tapped his foot and pulled at his under lip, and finally he murmured softly, "By George!" with a look of astonishment.

"What is it, dear? What is it that surprises you?"

"Why—er—I happened to remember something that works in with your two-and-two-make-four idea. Along in June, Mother, before I got your letter to sail, I went down to Asbury Park with the boys on a school excursion."

"Yes, I remember you wrote me about it."

"Well, there was a gipsy camp there, and a woman with big gold ear-rings told my fortune."

"Yes?"

"She said I was going on a long journey across water. She got that right, did n't she? And she said I was going to get an important letter."

"That was my letter."

"No, no, because this was to be a letter written on stone. The boys laughed at that, for how could a letter be written on stone?"

"Go on, dear," urged the mother.

"The gipsy woman said I was to find this letter in a house without a window, where there was a bed that had never been slept in. Sounds crazy, does n't it? A house without a window!"

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Mrs. Evans thought intently, then, with a cry of sudden understanding, "No, it's true! Don't you see? The house without a window is—*there!*" She pointed to the somber mass of Cheops. "The bed that has never been slept in is the sarcophagus in the king's chamber."

"Great Scott!" cried Harold, stirred at last to genuine excitement. "And the letter written on stone? What do you make of that, Mumsy?"

"The letter written on stone is a message from your father. It's waiting for us—in there—somewhere. You must find it, my boy; you must find it."

CHAPTER II

FACING THE DRAGON

HAROLD EVANS—they called him “Sandy” Evans at St. Paul’s school, where he played short-stop on the nine—had inherited from his father a certain practical businesslike quality that had often served him. “It’s a sensible kid!” his room-mate used to say. “No slop-over, but when he starts, he stays.”

And now that Harold (for his mother’s sake) was enlisted in this pyramid adventure, he proposed to see it through. If there was only one chance in a hundred that his father was alive, that father whom he had always looked up to as to a wise elder brother, why he’d take the chance if it brought him up against the toughest old dragon in Turkey. His father! The boy shut his lips, choking back a gulp, and made ready to tackle Cheops. Where was this chamber with the five stone trunks?

“Say, Mumsy, how many rooms are there in the pyramid? Got any idea?” he asked presently,

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and, as she shook her head, he added, "Let's go to the hotel and get a guide-book, and talk to the clerk, and we'll find out where we're at."

As they walked along the edge of the desert towards the Mena House, about five minutes distant, they caught sight of a trolley-car laden with tourists speeding along the broad avenue, bordered with arching acacia-trees, that leads from Cairo.

"It seems like a desecration," sighed Mrs. Evans, "to have a sputtering trolley-line running to this sacred spot."

"I don't see that, Mother. The pyramids are n't any more sacred if you pay five dollars to see 'em in a carriage, are they? Hello! that must be where you go in!"

He pointed to a dark opening near the base of Cheops where a group of white-robed Arabs were seated cross-legged on the great stones, two of which slanted together upward, as if guarding an entrance underneath.

As they approached the hotel, a grizzled Turk in red fez, red slippers, and baggy blue trousers came forward respectfully to meet them.

"Here's Deeny, Mother. Hello, Deeny! *Sabah hire olsoun!*" ("How are you?") said the



North face of the Great Pyramid, showing the entrance.

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boy, falling naturally into Turkish, as he saw their old family servant.

“*Choke eyi, effendi,*” (“Very well, sir,”) answered the Turk, salaaming three times, from the eyes and the lips and the heart, as is the custom.

Deeny—his real name was Nasr-ed-Din—had been an important member of the Evans household for fifteen years. He had watched over Harold as a baby, and had accompanied Dr. Evans on scores of perilous expeditions, acting as a faithful body-guard.

“I can’t make a Christian of him,” the doctor used to say, “and I’ve given up trying. I tell him he’s a Christian without knowing it.”

In spite of his sixty years, Nasr-ed-Din was as strong as a horse. One day he unloaded a small upright piano that had been brought to Adana on a squeaking bullock-cart, and carried it into the house on his shoulders. And he stood there impassively for two or three minutes, without ever thinking of putting his burden down, while Mrs. Evans decided where the instrument should be placed.

Nasr-ed-Din had grieved deeply over his master’s loss, and had refused to leave Mrs. Evans’s service. He would do whatever she wished, go

FACING THE DRAGON

wherever she said. He would make the beds, cook the food, wash the clothes, anything except leave the lady he had served so long. And so he had stayed and proved himself invaluable.

“Say, Deeny, d’ye know anything about this pyramid?” questioned Harold. “Ever see it before? Ever been inside it?”

“*Yok,*” (“No,”) said the servant, clucking his tongue, and lifting his chin in decided negative.

“No? Well, we’ve got a job there, you and I, and I wish you’d get busy. Have a talk with those Arabs. Ask ’em if they know about a room with five stone trunks in it. We’ve got to find it. See?”

After some further explanation, Harold sent the resourceful Turk off in search of information, while he addressed himself to the hotel clerk. Mrs. Evans, meantime, went up-stairs to her room to write some letters.

The hotel clerk, a red-faced Englishman with an important manner, had never heard of a chamber in the pyramid containing five stone trunks. He did n’t believe there was such a chamber, but admitted he was not an authority, being too busy.

In the library Harold found a book about the Great Pyramid, and studied this diligently for an

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hour. It was pretty hard reading. There were pages of figures and diagrams like geometry.

"Have you found anything?" asked his mother, when she joined him later.

The boy looked up with flushed face and tumbled hair. "Have I found anything? I should say I have. Listen to this." Then he read from the page: "'The length of the earth's polar axis is assumed by pyramidists to be 500,000,000 pyramid inches, or 7891.41 pyramid miles of 63,360 pyramid inches to the mile, or 7899.30 English miles.' Now that's what I call interesting!" he grinned.

"Harold, what *is* the use?" his mother began, but the boy stopped her with a grandiloquent wave of the hand.

"Madam, I know what you're going to ask. You want to know what is the *use* of this Great Pyramid. You want to know why it was built. Madam, I can give you nine answers—all different. Listen!" He turned to the index of the book. "'It was built as a barrier against desert sands. As an imitation of Noah's Ark. As Satan's Seat. As a filtering reservoir. As Joseph's granary. As a gift of the Queen of Sheba. As a tomb of the King. As a standard of weights and measures.' And finally, to please

FACING THE DRAGON

the ladies. I like the last one, Mumsy," he laughed.

"I wish you would n't trifle, Harold. Did you—did you learn anything about the—the chamber I described?" Mrs. Evans asked anxiously.

Harold saw the tenseness of his mother's look, and answered affectionately, hiding the fact that he had searched the pages in vain for any mention of such a chamber.

"Don't you worry, Mumsy. Deeny and I are going into the pyramid now, and if those five stone trunks are there—"

"They *are* there; they must be there!" she insisted.

"Then we 'll find 'em. You can bank on that. I 'll go right over and see what Deeny 's doing."

He kissed his mother fondly and told her to cheer up, and said he 'd be back in a couple of hours or so.

"God bless you, my boy," she whispered, and there were tears in her eyes as he turned to go. "I 'll be waiting at the mouth of the pyramid to meet you when you come out," she added.

Alas, they little knew how many weary weeks and months must pass before they would meet again!

CHAPTER III

THE THIRD CHAMBER

TEN minutes later, Harold entered the Great Pyramid, making his way carefully along a passage about four feet square that slanted downward at a fairly steep incline for about sixty feet, and then slanted up again. Two Arabs, chosen by Nasr-ed-Din, went before him, and the Turk came last. Each one carried a candle, and as the bent procession moved along, their flaring shadows danced strangely on the yellowish walls.

At the top of the second incline, the passage straightened out and ran forward on a level for a hundred feet or so, where it opened into a large room, about eighteen feet in each dimension.

“Deeny, what are those fellows carrying sticks for?” whispered Harold.

Nasr-ed-Din gestured that he did not know.

“Queen’s chambaire,” announced one of the white-robed guides, holding his candle high.

“Hello! you speak English!” said the boy.

THE THIRD CHAMBER

“Yes, sair. Vair good Engleesh. My name, Saide. Look out, sair.”

At this moment Harold was startled by a whizzing sound, and a number of small, swiftly moving creatures darted through the candle-light.

“What are they? Birds?” he cried.

“Bats. Turn your back, sair. They hit you, or—bite you.”

As he spoke Saide swung his stick about him vigorously, and moved toward a long, narrow recess in the wall, shaped like a Gothic window. It was out of this recess that the bats seemed to be flying.

“Do bats bite?”

“Peermid bats bite, sair. If he catch your cheek, peermid bat cut heem out a hole.”

Harold asked what this recess in the wall was for.

“Queen’s say-coph-gus,” answered Saide.

“Oh I see!” smiled the boy. “And where is it now, the *say-coph-gus*?”

Saide expressed the pious opinion that Allah alone could answer that question.

Harold walked back and forth about this chamber, which was bare and empty, except for clouds of irritating dust. The floor was perfectly even, with no sign of stone trunks.

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“Try the next room,” he ordered, and the procession started back along the same level passage. “Wait! Let me go first.” He pushed ahead with the zeal of an explorer, and Nasr-ed-Din came close behind, which was fortunate, for they had not advanced more than fifty feet, when a shriek of terror resounded through the pyramid.

“You black scoundrels! Let go of me! Help! Help!”

Harold sprang forward, and presently came upon two Arabs who were struggling with a young tourist, pressing him down, with threatening gestures, over an opening that yawned like a well in the floor of the passage.

“Come on, Deeny! Quick!” shouted Evans. Here was a white man—or boy—perhaps an American, in trouble, and without waiting for further explanation, Sandy swung on the nearest Arab in good United States style, catching him cleanly on the jaw, and tumbling him backward in dazed astonishment. Nasr-ed-Din, meantime, had seized the other Arab by the scruff of his neck, and, with huge strength, was dangling him over the black gulf, while the fellow rolled his eyes piteously and howled for mercy.

“*Brakkahyim-mi, effendi?*” asked the Turk,

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turning to Harold, which, being interpreted, is, "Shall I drop him, sir?"

"No, no! Not drop!" shouted Saide from behind, and explained rapidly that this opening led straight down into the rock for an immense distance under the pyramid. The man would be dashed to death.

But the Turk paid no attention, and still held his captive at arm's-length, squirming over the void.

"*Brakkahyim-mi, effendi?*" repeated Nasr-ed-Din, his eyes flashing.

"It would serve him jolly well right," said the stranger. "He talked about dropping *me*, but—oh, well, let the poor wretch go."

"*Koy varsin* (Let him go), Deeny," said Harold, motioning to the Turk, whereupon the terrified Arab scurried away, muttering.

Then Sandy turned to his new acquaintance. He was a boy of about seventeen, tall and smartly dressed, with a frank, cheery face and Harold immediately recognized him as an American.

"I tell you, old chap, I owe you an awful lot," began the stranger, awkwardly.

"Glad I happened along," nodded Harold.

"Stopping at the Mena House?"

"Yep."

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“So am I. Suppose you ’re just starting in? I ’m just through.”

“You mean starting in the pyramid? Yes,” answered Sandy.

“Rotten place! They ought to have electric lights here and an elevator. Why not? Say, my name is John McGreggor.”

“Mine is Harold Evans.”

“I ’m from Chicago.”

“I ’m an American too. Say, you ’d better take my man Deeny along with you. I ’ll be all right until he comes back. They won’t try to hold up anybody else to-day. Besides Deeny picked out these Arabs of mine, and Deeny knows his business.”

“That ’s awfully decent of you,” said the other boy. “I ’ll send him right back. By-by! See you at dinner!” he called, as he drifted away, candle in hand, through the long, stone passage, straight as a telescope, that is said to have pointed exactly to the north star, some six thousand years ago, when the pyramid was built.

As soon as McGreggor had vanished, Harold came back to the business in hand.

“Now, then,” he turned to Saide, who had been squatting discreetly beyond the well, “we ’ll try the next room.”

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“Yes sair. King’s chambaire—by Great Gallery.”

The Arab sprang forward with nimble bare feet into another passage, wider than the first and lofty as a church, that stretched upward in a steep incline like a strange mountain railway with a four-foot depressed level between its stone tracks. At the upper end of this Great Gallery, was a chapel-like vestibule that led into the vast chamber where mighty Cheops was laid to rest in his sarcophagus.

This was the first object that caught Harold’s eye, the scarred and battered red-rock casket that has stood there, lidless and empty, these many centuries. The boy noticed that the walls of this king’s chamber were defaced with many names and inscriptions, and he studied these mural writings eagerly, moving his candle back and forth; but he came upon nothing more important than the foolish scrawlings of tourists that had passed.

“See jynte,” exclaimed Saide, proudly, pointing to the thin, straight lines, like pencil rulings, that showed the joining of the huge stone blocks in the walls, some of them ten feet square. “Very small jynte. No leetle bit you can put yer finger up.”



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View of the Great Gallery of the Great Pyramid.

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“Next chamber,” directed Harold briefly.

The guide held out his brown hands, palms up, and lifted his shoulders apologetically.

“Ees no more chambaire, sair,” he replied.

“What?”

“No more chambaire, only—” He hesitated, then turned and led the way back to the end of the Great Gallery, where he pointed upward among the dim shadows. There in the topmost corner of the lofty vault, Harold made out some wooden cross-bars set across the walls.

“Well?”

“Very hard, sair. Must have ladders, ropes. Dang’russ!”

“That ’s all right. Ah! Here ’s Deeny! Did you get him out all right? Good. Deeny, we ’re going up there. You make him get the stuff, and—hustle. I’ll wait here.” This in vigorous Turkish, which Nasr-ed-Din forthwith translated into Arabic with fear-compelling gestures.

Saide turned pleadingly to Harold. “You geeve bakshish, sair. Only want you be sateesfy. Want good name ’mong ’Muricans. You know Meester Rogaires? He ’commend me. You know Mees Weelyams? She ’commend me. You give bakshish?”

The extra bakshish being promised, Saide and

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Nasr-ed-Din hurried off, leaving Sandy with the other guide, whose name turned out to be Mahomet. Mahomet explained that they were now going to climb to the mysterious five chambers that tier above the king's chamber, and are never visited except in rare cases by some venturesome and athletic tourist.

In a surprisingly short time, Saide and the Turk returned, their faces glistening from their efforts, and their arms filled with coils of rope.

With fascinated interest Harold watched Saide as the Arab, by some miracle of skill, worked his way, foot by foot, up the precipitous corner walls of the Great Gallery with ropes hitched around his waist, and a lighted candle in his teeth.

"Now, sair, your turn," he called, when he had reached the cross-bars, and his voice resounded through the pyramid with strange reverberations.

If Sandy Evans had been an archeologist or an Egyptologist, he would have taken careful note of the next hour's exploring. It was a great experience. First (after reaching the cross-bars) he crawled on hands and knees through a rough horizontal tunnel, thick with dust, that led into an upright shaft full of twittering bats. Up this shaft he wriggled and presently came to a

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jagged hole, like a fireplace out of a chimney, that opened into the first chamber. Then a yard or two above this, to another hole that opened into the second chamber. And so on. Before he had gone far, Sandy Evans was a woeful sight, streaming with sweat and smudged with dirt, but he shut his teeth and pressed on. He was looking for five stone trunks.

The first chamber was a good-sized room but ridiculously low, not over two feet high in the lowest part, and scarcely four in the highest. The second chamber was about a foot higher, and the third chamber was higher still, so that Sandy could stand upright in it. In each of these rooms the ceilings were formed of great granite blocks, smooth and level, whereas the floor blocks offered uneven surfaces like rough-hewn boulders. And in the third chamber—there was no doubt about it—these boulders took the form of monster trunks, five of them, ranged along side by side with narrow spaces between.

As Sandy lifted his candle and made out these grim gray forms, he gave a little gasp and then stood rigid.

“By George! it’s true!” he murmured, swallowing hard. “Mother *did* see it!”

Then he turned to the wall, and, just opposite

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the middle trunk, he discovered a small square opening. "That's true, too! It's *all* true!"

Now the boy knew that he was about to find a message from his father. He *knew* it. And, going to the wall with a strange, confident faith, he examined the polished stone about the small square opening. There it was! His father's handwriting!

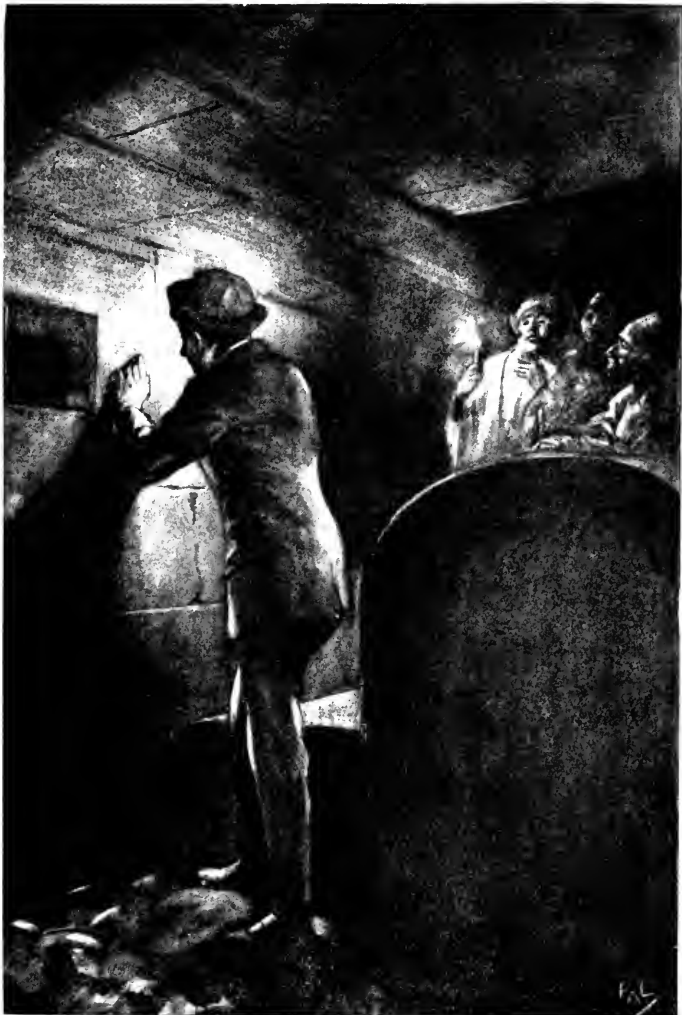
To Mary or Harold or Nasr-ed-Din:

You must go to Jerusalem and find the Greek monk, Basil, who has a carpenter shop in the tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and ask him to—

It ended abruptly with no date and no signature, but the handwriting was unmistakable.

Harold stood staring like one in a trance. This incredible thing had happened. His father was alive and—in his great peril he had tried to write a message to those who loved him. He had tried to tell them what to do, but—he must have been interrupted—perhaps by his enemies—perhaps—

A rush of sickening fears made the boy weak. He staggered away from the wall, but—it seemed as if he could not go on. He leaned heavily against a stone mound and tried to collect himself. He *must* go on. He must hurry back to



Harold stood staring like one in a trance.

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his mother with this wonderful news. He must hurry, but—

The thought of his mother gave Harold new strength. His mother! It was her love and trust that had brought them this great joy. He must be brave for her. He must think of everything and—the first thing was to carefully copy down these precious words of his father. There! Now—to start on the downward climb.

Having carefully put away his father's words, the boy told Deeny he was ready to descend, and a few moments later, they were back in the Great Gallery. And two minutes after that, a smudged and perspiring, but radiantly happy, youth sprang out from the pyramid entrance and looked about for his mother. She had promised to be here, waiting for him. Where was she?

“Oh, Mumsy, hoo-oo!”

He gave the familiar call, and listened confidently for the answer. But no answer came. Queer! She must be about somewhere. Ah, yes, she had gone over to their breakfast place under the palms. He strode across the sand, but, no, she was not there! Filled with a vague alarm, the boy hurried back to the hotel. His mother must have grown tired waiting. Perhaps she had a headache. Had the clerk seen

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Mrs. Evans? The clerk shrugged his shoulders at Sandy's disreputable appearance. No, he had not seen Mrs. Evans. She went out a couple of hours ago, and had not returned.

Sandy Evans felt a sudden gripping at the heart. His mother had not returned. He looked at his watch. Three o'clock. How the time had passed! Wait! Perhaps she had gone to her room, and the stupid clerk had not seen her. He raced up the stairs two steps at a time, but he came down slowly. No, not there. And no little note on the pincushion. *Where could his mother be?*

Sandy hurried back to the pyramid. He searched everywhere and questioned everyone. Alas! There was no comfort here and the boy felt a sickening sense of his own impotence against the shadows and mysteries of this colossal tomb. Could it be that his mother was hidden inside, lost somewhere in those mysterious passages and chambers?

The lad rushed back to the hotel in a panic of alarm. Perhaps his mother was right when she said that the cruel cunning of their enemies could follow them into Egypt? Had these enemies struck at them again—here—now? White-faced, Harold sought out Nasr-ed-Din and con-

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fided his fears to the faithful Turk, then they continued their search together. At six o'clock they were still searching. At nine o'clock they were still searching. At midnight Deeny persuaded his young master to go to his room and try to get a little sleep.

Harold threw himself upon the bed heartsick and weary. He had learned nothing. He had found nothing. No one had seen his mother. No one knew anything about his mother.

A dozen times through that dreadful night Sandy Evans stole into his mother's room, hoping against hope, but the room was always silent and empty. In desperate terror he knelt down by his mother's bed and tried to say his prayers, but always before his eyes came visions of those black, strange rooms in the pyramid. Was *she* a prisoner, his darling mother, in some such lonely chamber? Was she in danger? Was she in pain? Try as he might to be brave and manly, these torturing thoughts brought choking sobs and, burying his face in the pillow, the poor boy struggled with the loneliest, bitterest hours that had ever come into his life. Meantime, down below in the purple-shadowed courtyard, Nasr-ed-Din sat crooning one of those strange minor

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chants that, for centuries, have relieved bruised hearts in this land of beauty and mystery and sorrow.

CHAPTER IV

JACK MC GREGGOR'S STORY

DAYS passed, and nothing more was heard of Mrs. Wicklow Evans. Her disappearance was as complete and unaccountable as that of her husband the year before. It was evident that another crime had been committed, but whether there was any connection between the two, the authorities were at a loss to say. The American consul at Cairo, and various English and Egyptian officials, did what they could in the way of an investigation; they arrested several Arabs with doubtful pyramid records, and tried to frighten them into some sort of avowal, but the Arabs swore by Allah and all the stars of heaven that they knew nothing about this unfortunate lady. Then liberal rewards were offered, and a search was made in Cairo and various Egyptian villages, but all to no avail.

"It's incredible," declared the American consul. "We have no clue to the criminal, no motive for the crime, and not the slightest indication as



A view of Cairo from outside the walls.

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to what really happened. All we know is that on a certain afternoon, Mrs. Evans strolled casually out of the Mena House, leaving all her things, clothing, money, jewelry, and never came back. At one moment she was there by the pyramid, and the next moment she was gone."

During the first sad days that followed his mother's disappearance, Harold found much comfort in the companionship of John McGreggor, or Jack, as he soon learned to call him, who proved himself, in this emergency, a loyal and sympathetic friend.

"You stuck to me that day in the pyramid," said Jack, "and now I'll stick to you."

Together the two boys went over every circumstance of this mysterious case, weighing scraps of evidence, searching for motives, questioning the Arabs, and arguing, like two detectives, over various theories of the crime. Harold confided fully in his companion, telling him of his mother's extraordinary vision—if vision it was, and of her firm conviction that Dr. Evans was still alive; he also showed Jack the unfinished message that he had found in the third chamber of the pyramid.

"Talk about mystery stories!" exclaimed Mc-

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Greggor. "This beats anything I ever read, and I've read 'em all!"

Then, for the hundredth time, they speculated as to what could have happened to make Dr. Evans break off his message in the middle of a sentence.

"What gets me," reflected Jack, "is how your father imagined that you would ever find his message in such a freak place. He might as well have written it on top of the north pole."

"Perhaps he wrote messages in different places—where they took him—just on the chance," suggested Harold.

"Perhaps your mother is writing messages now—somewhere. Excuse me, old boy, I didn't mean to make you feel bad."

"It's all right, Jack. We've got to talk this over," said Evans, bravely. "I guess I'd go crazy if I didn't have you to talk to."

After much discussion, the boys decided that it was best to say nothing to the authorities about the message that Harold had found.

"Here's the point, Sandy," argued Jack. "Your father and mother have been carried off by the same party—that's certain. He must be a rich and powerful old scoundrel who has some reason that we don't know about. Am I right?"

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"Why do you think he's rich?" questioned Harold.

"He must have money to get away with such a thing—money and power. We're up against a big villain, Sandy, a first-class villain, and we don't want to let him know the cards we hold. I say cards; as a matter of fact, we've only got one card up to date, but that one's a peach."

"You mean Basil?"

"Sure. That little Greek carpenter in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher sounds good to me."

"He's a Greek monk, Jack, and he don't have to be little."

"He can be anything he likes, but we want to play him for all he's worth, and not let the rich scoundrel know we're after him."

"You mean after Basil?"

"Sure! The thing for us to do, after we've done all we can here to find your mother—I'm afraid we've done that already."

"I'm afraid we have."

"The thing for us to do, Sandy, is to skate across to Jerusalem just as fast as we can without letting any one know we're on the track of anything. I wouldn't even tell that big Turk of yours."

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"Deeny? Oh, he's all right."

"Don't I know that? Did n't I see his arm action? He's a wonder. Just the same, he might n't hit it off so well with our friend the Greek monk. And we don't want Brother Basil dropped into a well until we've got his secret out of him. Do we?"

Harold smiled.

"I see. I'll be careful." Then he was silent a moment. "Say, Jack," he went on awkwardly, "it's mighty good of you to take this interest in my troubles, but—tell me, are you—are you thinking of going to Jerusalem *with* me?"

"Am I thinking of it? Does a man leave a ball game in the ninth inning—with the score tied and three men on bases? I'm going to see that Greek carpenter, if it's the last thing I do. You can't drive me away with a club—that is," he added, with a keen glance, "unless you'd rather not have me."

"Oh, no!" answered Harold, quickly. "There's nothing I'd like so much as to have you come along, Jack, and—and see what we can do—only—I was afraid you might have other plans and—er—"

"Other plans?" laughed McGreggor. "I've got the smoothest collection of other plans you

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ever heard of. I s'pose you've been wondering what I'm doing over here anyway, knocking around Egypt looking for trouble instead of being back where I belong, grinding out Latin verses and proving that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to—to some other foolish thing."

"This is vacation," suggested Harold.

"Yes, but I'm not going back to boarding-school *after* vacation. I'm a bird of the air. I'm free. No more hypotenuses in mine. I'm on my way around the world."

"That's great!"

"Maybe not. Maybe I'm a dunce, as my distinguished father has insinuated. Sit down, Sandy, and I'll tell you the sad story of John McGregor."

Then Jack explained how a serious disagreement between himself and the elder McGregor had grown out of the double question of Jack's going to college and Jack's yearly allowance.

"You see I don't want to go to college, Sandy. The governor never went, and why should I?"

"Does he want you to go?"

"He's crazy about it—says he'd be a bigger man if he'd gone. I tell him I don't want to be a bigger man than he is. I don't want to be a rah-rah boy with a ribbon on my hat and a bull

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pup. I want to go into business with Father and learn the things he knows. Am I right?’

“I’ve always wanted to go to college,” said Harold, thoughtfully. “Could n’t you go into business afterward?”

“And waste four years? And get all out of the business idea? Why, I’d prob’ly come home in my senior year and patronize the old gentleman. It’s a fact. I’ve told him all this, but he won’t listen. He says I’ll have money enough anyhow, and—well, college is the thing, according to Father. So I finally compromised. I said, ‘All right, I’ll go to college, but I’ve got to have an allowance of five thousand a year.’ He said three thousand, but I stuck to five. ‘Take me into business, Dad, and I’ll get along on fifty dollars a month pocket-money,’ I said, ‘but if it’s college, then I want five thousand.’ You can see, Sandy, if a boy’s going to make a fool of himself, he’s got to have the coin to make a fool of himself with. Am I right?”

John smiled engagingly as he advanced this singular theory.

“Five thousand dollars is a big allowance,” reflected Sandy. He remembered that his father’s entire yearly income as a missionary doctor had never exceeded fifteen hundred dollars.

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“I know it ’s a big allowance. I put the figure high to discourage the old gentleman, but it did n’t work. Dad ’s awfully stubborn. He hung fast to his original proposition, and at last we compromised on—say, *that* was a great idea—took me a whole night to land it. Listen! I make this trip around the world—with three thousand dollars that the governor advances. And if I come home *after* the trip, with the three thousand still to the good, then he admits that I’ve got business ability, and takes me in with him, and forgets about the college. *But*, if I just have the trip and blow in the three thousand, then I admit I’m not as smart as I thought I was, and I stop kicking, and go to college—with a ribbon on my hat. Savvy, Sandy?”

Young Evans listened to this explanation with growing wonder.

“Oh, yes—I understand, but—say, you ’ve got your nerve all right!”

“How so?”

“I’ve heard of fellows working their way through college, but when it comes to working your way around the world, and—stopping at first-class hotels—how are you going to do it, man?”

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"Tell you how, Sandy. My father's in the show business."

"Oh!" said Harold, blankly.

"Moving-picture houses—five and ten cents—you know. He's got a string of 'em all over the country. Fellow pounds on the piano while the cowboys chase the villain and the battle-ships salute the flag and all that,—*you* know."

"Yes, I know."

"Packed all the time. Everybody goes—ministers, servant-girls, everybody. Barrels of money in it, but it's hard to get good films—a new idea—a snappy story—something different. See?"

"What's this got to do with your round-the-world scheme?"

"A whole lot. Good films with a novelty are worth money, and I'm out to get good films. I've got the finest moving-picture outfit there is. I'll show it to you—up in my room. That's what I was looking the old pyramid over for—thought I might strike something—*was* going to have Arabs race up and down and do stunts, but—there's not enough story in that. You've got to have a *story*."

Harold was becoming interested.

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"I wish I could help you, Jack, to think up a story," he said.

"Help me? Why, you have helped me. This is the first big idea I've had—this kidnapped missionary lay-out. Excuse *me*, Sandy, you know I'm sorry, but—just as a story—this family adventure of yours is a regular head-liner, you know that!"

"You mean you could—you could make some money out of it?" hesitated Harold.

"Make some money? I'll bet it's worth a thousand dollars before we get through with it—that means five hundred for you, Sandy."

Harold gasped in amazement. "Five hundred dollars for—for what?"

"Well, you talk Turkish, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And Deeny talks Arabic?"

"Sure."

"There's ten dollars a day saved right at the start. Would n't I have to pay an interpreter to drill the company—you know—in the moving-picture story? Besides, Deeny can pose as a Turkish pasha, or a Circassian bandit, or an Armenian that's got to be massacred. It's a case of hire a costume and dress him up. He'll make a *great* bandit—great!"

JACK MCGREGGOR'S STORY

"Yes, yes, but—" the boy hesitated a moment, reflecting that ten dollars a day would come in wonderfully well to help out the small store of money he had found among his mother's things.



Boys in Cairo.

Still it did not seem right or—or delicate to allow his father's misfortunes to be used in a moving-picture story.

"Can't you see this thing opening out?" rattled on Jack. "The Circassian bandit with their prisoner are fleeing over the desert on camels—say, *there's* a moving picture for you!"

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"Circassians live in the mountains, and they ride horses," objected Harold.

"All right, they 're fleeing over the mountains—on horseback. Mountains are better anyway—you can have 'em fall over precipices. And along comes a Greek monk—on a mule—from Jerusalem—he's a little villain with oily black hair and—"

"Hold on!" broke in Sandy, suddenly. "I—I don't want that Greek monk put in the story."

Jack looked at his companion in surprise.

"You don't?"

"No, and I don't want Jerusalem put in either."

McGreggor took out his gold watch and studied it with irritating deliberation.

"I see. I didn't know you had bought up the Holy Land, Mr. Evans. You ought to have told me."

Harold's face grew white at this sarcastic fling, and, for a few moments, the two boys eyed each other steadily, without speaking. The thing had come so suddenly that neither Jack nor Sandy knew exactly what had happened, but both realized, by that strange subconscious understanding possessed by boys, that something had shifted, and—it was the first warning of the gathering storm.

CHAPTER V

THE STOLEN PURSE

NOTHING happened, however, at the moment. The lads separated good-naturedly enough, and when they met the next day, there was no trace of resentment in either of them. On the contrary, they were more than ever friendly, as if they wished to forget this little tiff over a trifle.

More than two weeks had now passed since Mrs. Evans's startling disappearance, and the boys agreed that they could gain nothing by staying any longer at the Mena House, where they were spending about eight dollars a day.

"We'd better get a move on," said Jack. "We've got to follow up this trail. If you like, Sandy, I'll get the tickets."

And now, to his dismay, Harold discovered, after he had paid the price of his ticket and settled his hotel bill, that he had only a little over a hundred dollars left.

Jack noticed his friend's anxious look and

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broached the subject of money as delicately as he could.

“See here, old boy, we’re going into this thing together, a sort of partnership—share and share alike—am I right? We’d better see how we stand. What’s mine is yours, and—”

“That’s the trouble,” smiled Sandy, ruefully. “What’s mine is yours, too, but—there is n’t enough of it. There!” He drew out a handful of English sovereigns from his pocket and spread them on the table.

“That’s enough for pocket-money,” said McGreggor.

“It is n’t pocket-money.”

“But—you have a letter of credit?”

“No.”

“You have circular notes—or something?”

Harold shook his head wearily.

“No. That’s all I have in the world—every cent I have in the world, so when you talk about divvying up on your three thousand dollars—”

Jack coughed apologetically.

“I said I had three thousand dollars when I left Chicago. That was two months ago. It costs five dollars a day to live.”

“Sixty days at five dollars a day,” calculated Sandy, “that’s three hundred dollars.”

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“And my traveling expenses—that’s three hundred more.”

“Six hundred.”

“And two hundred and fifty for my moving-picture outfit.”

“Eight hundred and fifty.”

Jack pulled reflectively at his under lip.

“You have n’t counted incidentals,” he said finally. “You must add about—er—five hundred dollars for incidentals.”

Harold stared at him.

“Five hundred dollars for incidentals—in sixty days?”

“Tell you the truth, old boy, I went pretty fast on incidentals. I spent a week in London. It’s a dingy old town, but they have a great line of tailors, and—er—I rather blew myself on clothes—about seventy pounds, there or thereabouts.”

“Whew! Three hundred and fifty dollars!”

“And then I met a man in Paris, an American dentist named T. Beverly Hickman from Chicago. I guess I’ll remember T. Beverly Hickman.”

“Why, what did he do?”

Jack shut his lips tight and nodded grimly.

“Do? He did me! Gave me a fairy tale about how he’d lost all his money, and could n’t

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get home, and his wife and children were starving. Anyhow, he got two hundred dollars out of me, and then I found out that he'd made up the whole story. I may meet T. Beverly some day, and if I do—" There was a world of significance in the flash of McGreggor's keen, gray eyes.

"Too bad!" sympathized Sandy. "Anyhow, you've spent—let's see—eight hundred and fifty and five hundred and fifty—that's fourteen hundred dollars of your three thousand?"

"Right! I've got sixteen hundred left. And your hundred makes seventeen hundred. We have seventeen hundred dollars between us, Sandy, to pull this thing off. I mean to find your father and mother and get the—er—the moving-picture stuff."

"Can we do it?"

Jack smiled in a superior way. "Can we do it? With the chances we've got? And Deeny to help us? And that pointer from the third chamber of the pyramid? Sure we can do it!"

McGreggor's confidence reassured Harold against his own misgivings, and, with a business-like hand-shake, the boys agreed to pull together loyally in this strange partnership.

Two days before their steamer was to sail for Jaffa (the port of Jerusalem), the young travel-

THE STOLEN PURSE

ers moved to the Grand Hotel in Cairo, and here, on the very evening of their arrival, Jack McGregor got himself into an adventure that nearly spoiled their friendship and almost wrecked the expedition.

They had dined comfortably, and, about nine o'clock, Jack proposed a stroll through the languorous Esbekieh gardens. Sandy would have loved this, but his sense of duty bade him go to his room and answer a letter that had just arrived from the American Missionary Board in Constantinople in regard to Mrs. Evans. So Jack went off for his stroll alone.

About two hours later, as Sandy was preparing for bed and wondering what had become of his restless companion, he heard an angry muttering on the stairs, and presently McGregor burst into the room in a lamentable state, his clothes torn and his face cut. He was panting with rage.

"The scoundrels! The devils!" he cried. "Look at me, Sandy!"

Young Evans sprang to his feet.

"Who did it? Who did it?"

"A gang of robbers—thieves. I was walking in the gardens when a little chap came along selling flowers—double geraniums and gardenias, any—anyhow, I bought a shilling's worth, and

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A street in Cairo.

—I guess I let him see that I had plenty of money. Well, he went away, I thought, but about three minutes later, as I was looking down

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one of those queer narrow streets with carved balconies—you know—”

“Yes, yes.”

“Up comes this same little chap again, calling, ‘Murican gent’man! Murican gent’man!’ and he grabs my hand and points down the street. Just then one of those heavy iron-barred doors in the wall swung open and three men ran out, a white man in European dress and two Arabs. The white man was trying to get away from the other two, but they held him. He kept calling, ‘help,’ and I thought he was an American.

“I was feeling pretty fit, and I figured we ’d be all right two to two. Besides, you can’t turn your back on an American in trouble—you did n’t, Sandy.”

“Go on.”

“So I jumped ahead and stood by the white man, and as soon as I came up, the two Arabs stepped back.

“ ‘What ’s the matter?’ I asked.

“The white man mumbled something, and, before I knew it, the Arabs had caught me from behind so I could n’t move or yell or anything, and then the fellow I thought was an American—a fine kind of an American *he* was—he went through my clothes. Made a good haul, too, my

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pearl scarf-pin set with diamonds, and my gold watch, and five hundred dollars.”

“Great Scott!” exclaimed Sandy.

“I drew out the money to-day, Bank of England notes, so we’d have enough for our trip. Oh, if I could only have used my fists! But they held me tight, and, when they’d cleaned me out, they chucked me down in the gutter and skipped through the big gate back into the house.”

Jack sank weakly into a chair. He was almost crying with anger and humiliation.

“Brutes!” muttered Sandy. “We’ll make somebody pay for this!”

“That’s what! We’ll go to the police station. Come on, Sandy!” McGregor started for the door.

“Wait! I’ve got an idea that—I guess it beats the police station.” Harold thought a moment. “It does! It beats it! We’ll be our own police and our own detectives,” went on Sandy. “And it might make a moving-picture story, too. It would!”

Jack shook his head disapprovingly.

“See here, this is n’t a dime novel. It was real money I lost, and a real watch, and this is a real black eye. We’ve no time to waste on pipe dreams.”

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“Pipe dreams? Listen, you shop-worn person! You say they ’re a regular gang. I take it their business is working lonely wayfarers with coin?”

“Surest thing you know!”

“All right. What ’s the matter with letting ’em work me?”

“Work you? You mean—”

“With you and Deeny trailing after? Eh?”

“Deeny!” repeated Jack, and a grin spread over his battered countenance as he began to get the idea. He saw visions of what the huge Turk would do to these prowling scamps if he ever laid hands on them.

“By gracious, you ’re right, Sandy! And it *does* make a picture story, a peach!”

“I ’ll get Nasr-ed-Din and give him his line of work,” said Sandy. “We have n’t any time to lose. It ’s nearly midnight.”

Fifteen minutes later, a well-dressed young American might have been seen wandering through the now almost deserted Esbekieh gardens. On his waistcoat flashed a gold watch-chain which ended in a Waterbury watch, but no one knew this. The youth wandered on, leaving his coat carelessly open, and presently there began an Egyptian version of that always inter-

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esting farce, "The Biter Bit." The little flower-seller came forward pleadingly, as before, the three robbers appeared in the narrow street, tumultuously, as before, the youth answered the call for help chivalrously, as before, but, at this point, the sequence of events changed abruptly with the emerging of two crouching figures from the shadows. One of them carried a pistol and the other came armed with the terrible strength that nature had given him.

"Now, Deeny!" shouted Harold, suddenly, while Jack sprang forward leveling his pistol.

"One! two! three!" counted McGregor, slowly, as three times the Turk smote from the shoulder, and the three ruffians fell groaning.

Jack came forward and knelt over his prostrate adversary and quickly opened his coat.

"Now, my friend," he remarked, pleasantly, "you see the boot is on the other foot. I'll just take back my property—*this* pocket, I remember. No, no! Don't use little hands. Now then! Ah! Scarf-pin—watch—*and* the pocketbook! Everything just as it was."

He rose to his feet and motioned to Harold, who was standing guard over the two Arabs.

"All right, Sandy." Then to the white man, cringing at his feet, "You hound! Now go!"

THE STOLEN PURSE



"One! two! three!" counted McGregor, slowly.

With a swift gesture, Harold gave the same order to the two terror-stricken Arabs, and, a

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moment later, the discomfited trio were scurrying away into the night.

"Well, we pulled it off, old boy!" rejoiced McGregor as they returned through the gardens.

"We certainly did."

"Say, was n't Deeny *magnificent!* I believe he could have picked those fellows up and pitched 'em clean over the wall. You're *all right*, Deeny!" Jack turned to the big Turk with a gesture of high commendation, at which Nasred-Din's usually impassive face lighted up with pleasure, and he salaamed and saluted with all his soul.

So exultant were the boys over this success, that they talked of their dangerous *coup* long after they had returned to their rooms; they even acted out the scenes of it.

"We must remember every bit of it; we must write it down," urged Jack. "If we can work this up in a big way, it'll be a top-liner in the moving-picture houses. Take my word for it. Two American boys held up by bandits! Won't they thrill when the Turk gets his fine work in and the boy finds his purse?"

Here, with a grand flourish, Jack produced the

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stolen purse. "And when he finds the nice, crisp bank-notes just as he left 'em!"

He opened the purse and drew out a bundle of bank-notes. But, suddenly, his whole expression changed.

"Great Scott!" he cried, counting the notes with feverish haste.

"What 's the matter? What is it?"

For several moments Jack eyed his friend in solemn silence. Then he said slowly: "Sandy, *I know* I had five hundred dollars—that 's a hundred pounds—in this purse. A hundred pounds, no more, no less. *I know* just what I had."

"Well?"

"Well, it 's my purse, all right, but—Sandy, *there are two hundred and sixty pounds in it now!*"

CHAPTER VI

THE STORM BREAKS

“**T**WO hundred and sixty pounds!” repeated Harold, in amazement.

“That’s what I make it,” said Jack. “You count ’em.” He pushed over to his friend the pile of notes, fives and tens, printed on clean white paper with very black ink, as is the custom of the Bank of England.

“Two hundred and sixty,” verified young Evans. “There’s no mistake—that is to say, there’s a big mistake; there’s a mistake of—of one hundred and sixty pounds. Jack, are you *sure* you only had a hundred pounds?”

“Of course I’m sure! That’s all I drew out of the bank.”

“Then we’ve got a hundred and sixty pounds, eight hundred dollars, that belongs to—those bandits.”

“Not if they stole it.”

“Well, it belongs to some one. It does n’t belong to us.”

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"You 're right there, it does n't belong to us," nodded McGregor and a grin began to spread over his practical countenance. "Say, this helps the picture story a whole lot."

"But we can't keep it, Jack—we *can't* keep it!"

"N-no, we can't keep it. And we can't give it back to those scoundrels either. In the first place, we can't find 'em, and in the second place, as I remarked before, they stole it."

"I suppose they did," agreed Sandy. "It's a funny situation."

"I'll bet those crooks don't think it's so funny," laughed Jack. "It's like getting real money from a green goods man."

The more the boys talked this matter over the more perplexed they became, and they went to bed without having decided what they ought to do with the eight hundred dollars that had come into their hands so strangely.

The next morning the discussion continued. Harold suggested giving the money to the American consul and letting him do what he thought best with it.

But Jack objected.

"The American consul won't know what to do

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with that eight hundred dollars any more than we do.”

“He may find the owner.”

“And he may not. Cairo’s a big place.”

“If he does n’t find the owner, he can—well, he can give it to Americans who are in trouble. Lots of ’em get stranded over here.”

“Great idea, Sandy! This is a fund for Americans in trouble. We’re in trouble, so—there you are!”

Harold looked indignantly at his friend.

“I did n’t mean that,” he declared.

“Mean what?”

“Why, you say we ought to *keep* this eight hundred dollars.”

“I did n’t say any such thing,” retorted Jack. “*You* said the money could be given to stranded Americans in trouble.”

“But it was *your* idea that we might keep the money,” Harold insisted. “You know very well that’s what you meant.”

“See here, my young friend, suppose you let *me* be the judge of what I mean.”

In McGreggor’s tone there was a note of sudden defiance that angered Sandy. In boys’ quarrels it is not so much what is said as the way it is said that counts. Here was a deliberate chal-

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lenge, and young Evans knew it. They were right at the danger point again, but this time neither boy drew back, and neither used conciliation.

“Very well,” answered Harold, angrily, “you can be the judge of what *I* mean, too; and what I mean, Jack McGreggor, is this”—his voice was steady enough, but his face was white—“what I mean is that you can take your airs and your money and your moving-picture outfit and go—”

Even now one little friendly word from Jack, or a friendly look, might have ended the trouble, but Jack’s heart was hardened, and his answer only threw oil on the fire.

“Well, where can I go, Mr. Greek monk?” he asked tauntingly.

“Straight to Jericho, for all I care,” flashed Harold.

“I don’t take that talk from anybody!”

“You know what you can do!”

McGreggor stepped nearer with eyes flashing and arm drawn back threateningly, as he growled out:

“If that ’s what you want—”

“Not here in the hotel,” warned Harold. “I ’ll fight you this afternoon—anywhere you like.”

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“All right—out where we were—by the pyramid.”

“Pyramid suits me. What time?”

“Five o’clock.”

“Five o’clock.”

“I ’ll meet you there—five o’clock sharp.”

It was shortly after four when Harold Evans stepped off a Gizeh trolley-car and found himself once more under the vast shadow of Cheops. He had come out early on purpose, so as to be alone. He wanted to get through with this thing, and then never see Jack McGreggor again. The idea of suggesting that they should keep that eight hundred dollars!

Sandy walked slowly in the direction of the pyramid, but turned away toward the palm-trees, and then turned away again. Both places made him think of his mother, and a boy with a fight on his hands does not like to think of his mother.

The shadows lengthened. Some drums in a neighboring village announced marriage festivities. A company of yelling riders circled the plain at amazing speed. They were *jereed* players, part of the two days’ wedding celebration.

Young Evans sat down near the temple of the Sphinx. He wondered how he would come out



R. Talbot Kelly

1896.

Jerceed play.

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with McGregor. Jack had the longer reach, but Harold was quick on his feet, and—he did n't care anyway, he was armed with the strength of a righteous cause. McGregor had insulted him, and—

Just then the harsh cough of a camel in a group of Bedouins, by some odd association of ideas, brought back the memory of that last meal with his mother, there under the palm-trees. He could see her face, and her hands, and the wonderful light in her eyes. He remembered how her voice had quivered as she asked a blessing on their simple meal.

Sandy stood up and stretched himself. This was a silly place for a fight. He ought to have known better than to come here. Of course he would think of his mother, and—if he did n't look out, he 'd be getting foolish, and—hello, here was Jack—climbing off the trolley.

Harold walked across the sand toward his adversary—his friend—the boy who had offered to divide all that he had with him and help him in his trouble and loneliness. This fight was a rotten thing, after all. He did n't believe McGregor had meant to keep that money. He 'd like to tell him so, but—

The boys nodded coolly, and Jack put down a

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bundle he was carrying. Then they stripped off their coats and collars, while an Arab looked on indifferently.

The first round was fairly even. At the end of the second, Harold came in cleverly under McGregor's guard, and knocked him down. At the end of the third, he knocked him down again.

Jack staggered to his feet, still game.

"Wait a minute," said Sandy. "I want to tell you something. I think I 'm in the wrong, Jack. I wanted to say so sooner, but—I could n't very well. You might have—you might have misunderstood. I don't believe you ever meant to keep money you were n't entitled to."

"I did n't, Sandy. I never meant to keep it. I give you my word I did n't," declared Jack.

"Then—then I apologize for what I said. I 'm sorry. There 's my hand, or—if you want to punch me some more, why—go ahead."

He held out his hand and stood waiting.

McGreggor answered awkwardly: "That 's very decent of you, and—I accept it—the way you mean it, and—there!" He caught young Evans's hand in a strong clasp.

"I 've got a vile temper," mourned Harold. "I wish you had punched me harder."

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"I punched you as hard as I could," said Jack, ruefully. "Say! two knock-outs in three rounds is going some."

Then they sat down under the palm-trees and ate sandwiches and cakes that Jack had brought along in his little bundle.

And now a strange thing happened. The sun sank behind a mass of livid clouds, and suddenly the light changed to an uncanny olive hue, as if some great magic-lantern operator had slipped a piece of greenish glass before the sun. And a low sighing wind came up from the desert. Both boys turned uneasily, and at this moment three distinct taps sounded on the ridge of rock beneath them.

"What was that?" cried Harold.

"Sounded like somebody knocking on this stone," said McGregor. "Listen! There it is again!"

"*You're* not doing that, Jack—with your foot or anything—are you?"

Jack shook his head solemnly. "It's prob'ly a bat, or a ghost, or something. Come on! Let's get out of this."

"Wait!"

Sandy's face was pale. He rose slowly and stood with his hands clenched and nostrils dilat-

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ing, looking down at a long line of gray rock that stretched away toward the pyramid.

“What’s the matter?”

“Now! Do you hear that? *Do you hear that?*” he whispered. “It’s the Morse code, one short and two long. That’s W. Somebody’s calling W. There! There! There! Harold moved his hands up and down each time as the taps sounded—“one short and two long.”

McGreggor turned wearily.

“What’s this got to do with us? I *wish* you’d come along. It’s prob’ly some Arab telegraphing his camel to take a bath.”

Harold flashed a look at his companion that brought him to immediate seriousness.

“John McGregor, four years ago, when I was in Adana—I was a little shaver, but I remember the Armenian massacre, and—sometimes we could n’t get from the compound where the missionaries lived to Father’s dispensary; it was n’t safe. So Father rigged up a telegraph line about half a mile long, and we all learned to click off messages. We all had different calls, and *Mother’s call was W!*”

“Great Scott, Sandy! You don’t mean—you don’t think—” Jack stammered in excitement and stopped short.

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“I think my mother is calling to me from somewhere through this rock, and *I'm going to answer her. Now listen!*”

CHAPTER VII

THROUGH THE ROCK

HAROLD drew out a combination pocket-knife (it contained a screw-driver, a button-hook, a pair of tweezers and various other things) and, seating himself, proceeded to strike its brass head against the rock beneath, using a regular telegraphic movement.

“My call was M—two dashes,” he explained; “I ’m calling M’s.”

He tapped steadily on the rock. M—M—M—
M—M—M—

The boy paused and listened. There was a moment’s silence, and then came the answering letter, sharply sounding through the silence of the desert. W—W—W—W—W—W—

“Hooray!” he cried. “There’s no mistake. She’s here—somewhere! My mother is here! Wait!”

Eagerly he clicked off a message, while Jack sat near, open-mouthed, like a boy at a melodrama.

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“Sandy, what are you sending? What are you asking? Tell me, Sandy.”

“I ’m asking where she is. I ’m telling her it ’s me. Keep still.”

Now an answering message came that made young Evans frown.

“What is it? What are you getting?” queried McGreggor.

“She says I must n’t ask where she is. Hold on!” He translated. “Do—~~not—try—to—rescue~~ — me — did — you — get — word — from —~~your—father?~~”

With quick fingers Harold repeated his father’s message written on the wall.

“Thank—God,” came the reply. “You—must—~~go—to—Jerusalem—at—once—answer.~~”

The boy hesitated, and a little gulp came in his throat. How could his mother ask such a thing! He turned to his companion with a flash of decision. “I can’t do it, Jack. I can’t leave my mother, and I won’t.”

“That ’s the talk,” approved the other. “We ’ll stay here until the Nile freezes over. Tell her so.”

And Harold tapped out the words: “Dear—~~brave—mother—I—cannot—leave—you.~~”

He paused, waiting for a reply; but none came.

THROUGH THE ROCK

"Jack, she does n't answer," cried Evans, in sudden alarm.

"Not so loud!" cautioned McGreggor. "They may be nearer than you think."

"They? Who do you mean?"

"Why—er—I s'pose somebody is with your mother. There must be."

Harold cast his eyes uneasily along the floor of the desert toward a cluster of rock-hewn tombs that lie at the base of Cheops.

At this moment, the tapping sounded again, but less distinctly, as if from a greater distance. "Will — send — word — be — at — Virgin's — tree — Virgin's — fountain —"

The message stopped, abruptly.

"Got that, Jack? Virgin's tree, Virgin's fountain?" Sandy whispered.

"Yes, but when? She does n't say *when* to be there."

"Wait!"

The clicking came so faintly now that Harold had to lay his ear close against the rock to make out the words: "To-morrow—afternoon—three — o'clock — put — on — hat — chilly — evenings—love."

Then the tapping ceased.

"I guess that 's all, Jack," sighed Evans, after

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they had waited a long time. "We 'd better start back. Is n't that like a fellow's mother, forgetting her trouble to worry about his hat being off? It *is* chilly, too. Ugh! These purple shadows may be artistic, but they look creepy to me. Let 's hustle."

They strode rapidly toward the trolley-car, hands in their pockets, each absorbed in his thoughts.

"Say, here 's a point!" broke in McGreggor. "How did she know your hat *was* off?"

The boys stopped short and faced each other.

"By George!" exclaimed Sandy. "I never thought of that. How *did* she know it?"

"She must have *seen* us. Must have been somewhere where she *could* see us."

"That 's so, but—*where?*"

On the ride back to Cairo they discussed the matter in low tones.

"I wonder where this Virgin's tree is," reflected Jack. "Ever hear of it, Sandy?"

Harold shook his head.

"She said Virgin's tree—Virgin's fountain. There must be a tree near a fountain. We 'll have to ask at the hotel, but—"

"What?"

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“My mother can’t *possibly* be coming there herself?”

“No.”

“Going to send somebody?”

“Probably.”

“Or a letter?”

“Maybe.”

“It strikes me as the most mysterious thing I ever got mixed up in, Jack.”

“Me, too, Sandy.”

And in this frame of mind they fell asleep that night.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

THE boys were up early the next morning and, having nothing better to do until three o'clock, they decided to see some of the sights of Cairo under the escort of a hotel dragoman named Mustapha who wore a very red fez and a pair of ivory handled pistols in his belt and who assured them, in incredibly bad English, that he would show them the Virgin's fountain, the Virgin's tree and other marvelous things.

They went, first, through a narrow, picturesque street, pleasantly cool after the blazing sun, and found themselves pursued here by a rag-tag company of Arab boys and girls who proclaimed themselves Christians and demanded bakshish in consequence.

"I'll snap some of these kids," said McGregor who had brought his kodak. "They'll come in handy for types and costumes."

And he pressed the button.

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

Presently Mustapha stopped at a heavily barred door.

"Deesa chawtch, sawh," he announced to Sandy. "K'mawp! Mine yer head."

In reply to his pounding, a fat Coptic woman with a baby in her arms appeared in the doorway and showed the way into the sanctuary.

They passed inside, whereupon Mustapha (still wearing his irreverent fez and smoking a cigarette) pointed to a square cistern in the stone floor.

"Deesa place bring de folk fer battize. Some leetle poy wanta be Chreestyun, bring here. Pries, come here. Take doff cloes laike gemmen go in boff. Wha dey call battize?"

"Go on, Musty! You're great!" chuckled Jack. "Show us some more."

Beaming at this praise, Mustapha lighted a candle and led the way to a pillared vault beneath the chancel. At either side were small recesses hewn in the rock.

"Deesa place tousan yeah before chawch. Dat's place fer Vawgin Mahy sleep. Deesa place fer Jozef sleep." He pointed to the recesses.

"Hold on, Musty, you can't give us that," ob-

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jected McGregor. "There is n't room for a doll to sleep there. Is there, Sandy?"

Harold agreed that these were scant sleeping quarters for Joseph.

"What's this?" he questioned, stopping at



A Nile ferry-boat.

another hole in the floor about the size of a small barrel.

"Dessa place Vawgin Mahy she wash cloes," Mustapha answered promptly.

After more fooling with their ingenuous guide the boys set out for the beautiful island of Roda in the Nile, where Mustapha assured them, with reproachful eyes against their smiles, that little Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daugh-

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

ter. To this island they drifted on a heavy, wide-nosed scow that plies across an arm of the river. A bare-legged boatman took his toll of two cents each with kingly dignity, then caught the long oar astern, and bent to his work.

“Look at those women,” said Jack, aiming his kodak at a dozen silent, black-clad figures huddled together at one end of the craft.

“Get on to their brass nose-pieces!” whispered Sandy. “Careful! They’re looking!”

“Got ’em!” triumphed the young photographer as the scow grounded and the Egyptian ladies hurried off toward the fragrant rose gardens that stretched beyond.

Soon the boys were gazing at the finding place of Moses, now the bed of a horizontal wooden wheel geared by clumsy wooden teeth to a vertical wheel that was bringing up irrigating buckets in an endless chain from the river below. There was no sign of bullrushes here for Moses to nestle in, but a sheer descent of stone wall, thirty



Egyptian woman wearing brass nose-piece.

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feet down to the water's edge. Mustapha explained that the wall was to protect the island against the river in its annual rise, marked there in blackish level-lines along the precipice.

"Do Europeans ever bathe here, Mustapha?" questioned Sandy.

"Yes, sair, sometimes gemmen take boff."

"It looks dirty."

"Wh-at?"

"Not clean."

"Some gemmen clean, some dirty."

"I mean the river looks dirty."

"Oh, river 'nough clean. Hotels drink heem. Khedive drink heem."

"Say, I *must* get a picture of that," exclaimed McGreggor and he pointed to a line of stately barges floating by with brown-skinned men swishing their bare feet in the current while others hauled at the long, sharp-slanting yards poised over stubby masts. "I believe we can work up a novelty with these still life pictures," he explained. "Have a fellow tell a story around 'em—maybe a girl would be better—the way they do with songs—you know."

A little later they had luncheon on the balcony of a charming shaded inn overlooking the river

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

and here Harold discovered that he had lost his valued pocket-knife. He remembered that he had it last at the pyramid.

"You must have left it in the *charwtch*," suggested Jack, and he sent Mustapha back to look for it, but the dragoman returned crestfallen.

"Nobody see heem gemmen's knaife," he declared.

Finally the boys set out for the Virgin's tree and the Virgin's fountain, which two objects of tourist interest were at Heliopolis, they discovered, just outside of Cairo and located in the beautifully kept grounds of no less a person than the Khedive himself. As they drove along the white road barefooted urchins raced beside their carriage offering baskets of strawberries set temptingly in green leaves.

"Berrees, me lord? Berrees, preence?" called the little fellows, and finally Jack bought two baskets for eight cents.

"I'll blow you off, Prince," he laughed. "Here! Great country, eh, Sandy?"

They stopped to inspect the oldest obelisk in the world, then to admire flocks of the white ibis grazing along the roadside, and presently they came to a wide-spreading sycamore-tree with thick, gnarled trunk that threw out its grateful

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shade near a clear, gushing spring. These, Mustapha smilingly declared, were the Virgin's tree



The obelisk at Heliopolis—the oldest in the world.

and the Virgin's fountain, the latter being used to water the Khedive's gardens, the former furnishing an income to the Khedive's gardener, who collected regular fees from tourists eager to see

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

the spot where the Virgin Mary rested in her historic flight from the wicked Herod.

Harold looked thoughtfully at the beautiful gardens, the banks of flowers, the vine-covered trellises, the towering palms, the deep-shaded banana-trees. Everywhere were tropical plants in profusion, and roses so abundant that a turbaned gardener came forward offering an armful, while near by a group of boys prepared future pocket-money by distilling attar of roses over burning sticks. Meantime Jack was busy with his kodak.

"It's a great setting," he declared. "Say, Musty! You climb up the sycamore-tree—there, on the first big branch. I'll take your picture."

Nothing could have made Mustapha happier than this offer, not even unexpected bakshish. He first removed his European outer garment (a sort of light overcoat), so as to show the richly embroidered jacket underneath and his formidable pistols. Then he settled himself on the branch in plain view, and, looking heavenward with as much lamblike ecstasy as his Oriental and swarthy features could command, he sat perfectly still.

"Look at him, Sandy! Take him all in," grinned Jack. "Is he a choice product? Is he? I tell you when a Cairo dragoman takes to posing

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as an archangel on a sycamore-tree—well, it 's worth recording. There!"

As McGregor pressed the button, Harold's eyes fell on what looked like a wasp's nest, a grayish bundle hanging from the branch where Mustapha was seated. But, as he looked closer, he discovered black lines running through the gray mass, and presently he saw that it was not a wasp's nest at all, but a lady's veil tied around the branch.

"By George!" he started.

"What 's the matter? What is it?"

Sandy consulted his Waterbury. "Ten minutes past three? What do you make it?"

"Twelve minutes past," said Jack. "Give your mother time."

Sandy shook his head. "She 's had all the time she wants. The message is here—*there!*" He pointed to the tree.

"I see a wasp's nest."

"It is n't a wasp's nest. That 's my mother's veil—gray, with black lines in it. She wore it the last time I saw her."

Sandy sprang into the tree, and quickly climbed out along the branch.

"Well, what do you know about that?" marveled Jack, as he watched his friend untie the

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

fimsy tissue and carefully descend to the ground.

"Now we 'll see what 's in it—if I can get these knots untied. I feel the crinkle of a letter. Hello! Here 's something hard! Great Scott!"

With a look of absolute amazement, Harold drew forth the pocket-knife that he had lost that very morning. Folded around the knife was a small blue envelope and a roll of money.

"Jack, it 's my knife! The one I lost! Look!"

McGreggor gave a long, low whistle.

"Say, these people have been trailing us." He glanced about him suspiciously, and added under his breath, "They 're probably somewhere around here right now."

With pounding heart Harold tore open the envelope and drew out several sheets covered with his mother's handwriting.

My Precious Son:

I am writing in haste, and cannot say all that I would like to. The important thing is that you must trust me. I am the only one who knows the circumstances, and can decide what is best to do; and I tell you, dear Harold, you *must not* stay here, or try to find me. If I were in danger, I would urge you to call at once upon the American consul in Cairo for assistance. But I am in no danger, although, of course, I am a prisoner; and I beg you to make no appeal in my behalf to any of the Ameri-

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can or English authorities. You must make no effort of any sort toward rescuing me or communicating with me for the present. It would mean more danger for your father.

Harold, I want you to go to your father at once. I am so happy that you found his message. God is protecting us, and will protect us, but *you must go to your father*. He needs you, and the only way to save me is to save him first. Be brave, my son. Trust to your mother's love and to her knowledge of conditions that you cannot understand, and do this that she bids you. *Do it at once*.

And remember one thing: *you will be watched from the time you leave Cairo*. You must not let any one know that you are looking for your father. Call yourself a tourist. Say you are likely to return shortly to America. *And do not keep this letter!* Fix it in your memory, and burn it.

There is much more to say, but—I must hurry. Be on your guard against a smooth-talking man with a close-cut dark beard. I think he's an Armenian, but he speaks perfect English. I noticed a fine, white scar across his cheek, but the beard almost hides it. The scar runs to the lower part of his ear, which is rather twisted. This man is employed by our enemy. It is he who told me that you had sprained your ankle in the Great Gallery, and made me go inside the pyramid, where they seized me. He is a dangerous and unscrupulous man—be careful.

My poor boy, it makes my heart ache to put this responsibility on you. I'm afraid you are short of

THE VIRGIN'S TREE

money, and I inclose forty pounds, which I have been able to borrow from a kind person, the one who has promised to deliver this letter. I shall try to send more money later. Go to Jerusalem and see the Greek monk. Then follow your best judgment, but promise me, my boy, that you will never, *never* stop until you have found your father! Tie my veil around the branch where you found it, as a sign that you give me this sacred promise to respect my wish that you do not try to find me, as yet, and that you will start at once for Jerusalem. God bless you and guide you!

Your loving mother,

MARY EVANS.

Harold read the letter slowly and carefully. Then he turned to his friend who had moved away.

“Oh, Jack!”

“Yes.”

“I want you to see this letter—from my mother. We have n't known each other so very long, old boy, but—we've come pretty close together, and—there! Read it!”

Jack read the letter in his turn—carefully and slowly.

“Well?” he said.

“It looks to me as if I've got to do what Mother says.”

McGreggor nodded.

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"I guess she knows what she is talking about, Sandy. Sounds like a pretty fine woman, your mother."

"Well, I should say she is a—a fine woman," Harold choked. "It breaks me all up to leave her, Jack, but—what she says about Father settles it. How about that boat we were going to take for Jaffa—it sails to-morrow, does n't it?"

"Yep. Train starts for Alexandria in the morning. Go on board in the afternoon and wake up at Jaffa."

"Did you get the tickets?"

McGreggor nodded.

"Tickets and passports, too. And Deeny's got the trunks ready."

"I guess we 'd better go."

"Guess we had."

"And say, Jack! I want you to bear witness that I promise—under this tree—by this spring—it's a kind of sacred spot—" the boy bared his head and lifted his fine earnest face—"I promise never to stop or give up until I have found my father and my mother. You hear me, Jack?"

"I hear you, Sandy, and here's my hand to help you. I don't care whether I get around the world or not. I'll stick by you."

Once more the boys clasped hands. And, after

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studying Mrs. Evans's letter so as to forget nothing, they burned it solemnly at the fire where the young Egyptians were distilling, drop by drop, the subtle perfume of roses. Then Sandy took his mother's veil, as she had bidden him, and tied it to the spreading branch of the ancient sycamore that grows by the Virgin's spring.

CHAPTER IX

THE TWISTED EAR

TWENTY-FOUR hours later, the two friends were aboard a Mediterranean steamer bound for the Holy Land. They had received valuable help from the American consul, who saw that their passports were properly drawn, and gave them some letters to friends in Jerusalem. He also took charge of Mrs. Evans's trunks until these should be sent for, and allowed the boys to leave with him, sealed in an official envelope, the one hundred and sixty pounds that had caused so much trouble.

"I don't see what we're going to do with it," the consul declared, "unless some one turns up who can prove title."

"I'll never touch a penny of it," insisted Jack.

"Neither will I," said Harold.

The consul smiled.

"All right, boys. I'll hold it here, awaiting your order. Maybe you'll have to give it to some old ladies' home."

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The very evening after they went aboard, Jack's zeal for picture material took him to the forward part of the vessel, where the deck passengers sleep, stretched on the bare boards under stained and tattered blankets, or lie awake, chatting and smoking. Here, among flickering lantern shadows, the boy studied strange types, long-bearded Jews sucking at water pipes, red-veiled women shuffling greasy cards, noisy Turks, sad-eyed Armenians, screaming babies, old men munching figs, and sleeping figures rolled into still bundles alongside of smelly goats and turkeys.

Meanwhile Harold Evans sat alone at the stern while the boat throbbed on through the still, warm night. The boy was in a serious mood. He felt that this was a critical time in his life. He thought of his father and mother, and of the task before him—of the dangers before him. He hoped for courage and for wisdom. He felt himself very small and helpless before this great task. He wished that he were older, wiser—not just an inexperienced boy. Then he remembered his mother's wonderful faith and his heart thrilled with a curious new confidence as he looked up at the silent, serious stars and suddenly *knew* that God was watching over him.

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Harold looked down at the white path the ship was cutting in the sea, and wondered what made the fire spots come and go in the rushing foam, now little ones like globules of burning oil, now broad, round ones like moons. He knew they called it phosphorescence, but forgot the explanation of it. Presently he noticed a light that flamed up low over the water, and then went out. A lighthouse on the coast of Africa! Or had they come to Asia?

A little later Jack came up, eager to tell of his experiences forward. He had discovered an interesting Syrian who had been all over America—New York City, and Lynchburg, Virginia, and Yazoo, Mississippi. He spoke perfect English—a clever fellow, and—he wanted to be a guide.

“The fact is, old boy, he wants to be *our* guide,” added McGreggor.

“We don’t need a guide,” said Harold. “We’ve got Deeny.”

“I know we have, but—he saw me fussing with my camera and—it seems he knows a lot about pictures. Says he ran an art gallery in Minneapolis, but he went broke.”

“We can’t afford an extra man.”

“Ah, that’s the point! That’s the queer thing about this chap. He says he’ll work for any-

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thing we want to give, or for nothing at all. He wants to get into the moving-picture game and—well, he 'll take chances on the future. I told him I 'd talk to you about it, and we 'd see him in the morning."

"There is n't any harm in seeing him," said Harold, quietly.

"I s'pose you 're feeling sort of—sort of broken up, old boy?" ventured Jack, as he drew up a steamer chair beside his friend.

"Oh, I—I 've been thinking about things, and—er—"

"I know. It 's tough, but—I tell you what pleases me, Sandy, it 's the way your mother was able to get that letter delivered. She must have a good friend in the enemies' camp and—that 's a whole lot."

"Yes, it is."

"And she was able to borrow money, that 's another good thing. I b'lieve she could get away if any big trouble came up; I 'm sure she could. She does n't *want* to get away now on account of injuring your father. Am I right?"

"It looks so, but—what gets me is how any man can be *fiend* enough to treat a woman so who—who 's never done anything but good to people."

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"Don't you worry," soothed McGregor. "He 'll get *his* later on, Mr. Fiend will. If we can't do anything else, I 'll cable Dad, and he 'll come over. He 'd just *love* to get into this game, Dad would. He 'd have your father and mother back with you *mighty quick*, or there 'd be a war-ship lying off Alexandria with the stars and stripes over her—now take that from me!"

"No, no!" objected Sandy. "We must n't do anything like that. You know what Mother said. And I 've given my promise. I tied that veil around the tree, Jack. Besides, I can see her point. The people who have done this have got themselves in so deep now that they would n't stop at *anything*. We might spoil our only chance by kicking up a row. We 've got to lay low and let them think every-thing 's going their way, and then, when we see our chance, *we 'll land on 'em.*"

"We 'll land on 'em hard!"

"But we must find Father first, I can see that. Can't you? And, Jack, we 've got to be foxy. We must n't let *any one* know what we 're after. Mother says we 'll be watched. Remember? Remember that chap she said to look out for?"

"Do I? Close-cut dark beard. Scar across his cheek."

THE TWISTED EAR

"A *fine* scar, Jack."

"Yes, and a twisted ear. I'll know him, all right."

Sandy's face darkened. "And now what shall we say about ourselves if any one asks us?"

"We'll say we're in the moving-picture business, *and we are!* We've got our outfit to prove it, the dandiest outfit in Jerusalem."

"That's so!" agreed Harold. "We're in the moving-picture business. And—say, Jack, nobody must know I'm the son of Wicklow Evans. You'd better introduce me to people as—er—Mr. Harold. That sounds all right. When you call me Harold they'll think it's my last name. See?"

A little later the boys retired to their stateroom.

When they came up on deck the next morning, they found the steamer anchored off as pretty a fringe of murderous reefs as one would wish to see. And beyond these, laughing in a blaze of sunshine, lay the ancient city of Jaffa.

Crowding around the vessel were little boats, tossing uneasily on the swells, and manned by clamoring Arabs whose business, it appeared, was to take the passengers ashore.

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“Is n’t there any harbor here?” asked McGregor.

“Does n’t look like it!” said Sandy. “By George, see that boat! They’ll be smashed to bits!”

As he spoke, one of the little boats with pas-



The port of Jaffa at low tide.

sengers huddled in the stern shot toward the dangerous reef where the sea was breaking fiercely over black rocks that stood up like ragged teeth. One tooth was missing, leaving an opening in the hungry jaw, and the boat was headed straight for this opening, as they watched it intently.

“They’re dandy boatmen if they get through

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there. Great Scott! They've done it!" cried Jack, his eyes bulging.

With the splash and lift of a great wave, the sure-handed Arabs had steered the frail craft through, and now they were floating safely in the smooth waters beyond.

"Bet you those people got soaked," said Sandy.

"They are lucky not to be drowned," remarked a passenger, standing near them, who was studying the reef with an opera-glass. "It's a nasty sea. Ah! there goes another boat! Would you like to look, sir?"

He offered his glass to Harold, who now, through the powerful lenses, saw the passage of the rocks with thrilling distinctness.

"Talk about shooting the chutes! Say, Jack, *there's* a moving picture worth taking!"

"It would be effective," agreed the stranger. "The surf, and the rocks, and the skill of these Arabs—*very* effective."

"Hello!" said McGregor, "you're the man I saw last night—you know, Sandy, the one I told you about from Lynchburg, and Yazoo, and—"

"And New York City, and many other places," smiled the new-comer. "Allow me to give you young gentlemen my card."

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He drew out his pocket-book and handed to each of the boys a card on which was printed:

MR. ARSHAG H. TELECIAN

COLLECTOR OF RARE

COINS AND STONES

"Thanks," said Jack. "My name is John McGreggor, and my friend is Mr.—er—Harold."

The coin collector bowed politely.

"You've been here before?" asked Harold.

"Many times. This is my country—Syria. I was born in the Lebanon Mountains."

"You speak mighty good English."

"I have spent years in America—some happy years; but—I had money reverses, and—the fact is I am looking for work."

"So my friend told me."

"We have n't had time to talk that over," explained McGreggor, "but if you're going up to Jerusalem, Mr.—" He frowned at the card. "Say, this name is a bird. Ar-shag H. Tel-ec-jian. What's the 'H' for?"

"The 'H' is a misprint. It should be 'M.' My middle name is Mesrop."

"Mesrop? Sounds like an anagram—you know, where you change the letters around and make a new word. Give us the whole thing—

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I want to learn that name. Go on," laughed the boy.

"It's very simple—Arshag Mesrop Telecjian."

"Arshag Mesrop Telecjian," repeated Jack, with a swagger. "Bet you can't say it, Sandy."

At this moment, Nasr-ed-Din came up to warn them that their boat was waiting, whereupon the boys invited the coin collector to join them, and presently the three were safe on shore, having passed the reef unharmed, except for a ducking of salt spray.

And at the custom-house Telecjian befriended them in a most extraordinary way, for while other and richer tourists were subjected to endless annoyance and delay, the American boys, with their trunks, bags, and picture apparatus, were waved promptly through the barriers by smiling and salaaming inspectors, all, apparently, because of a whispered word from Arshag Mesrop Telecjian.

"Say, you managed that pretty well, Brother Ashrag," said McGreggor.

"Not Ashrag, Arshag," corrected Sandy.

"I am glad to serve you, young gentlemen," bowed the Syrian. "It's better to avoid opening trunks. If they had found revolvers, for instance—" he looked at the boys keenly.



The landing at Jaffa.

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"We *have* revolvers," admitted Jack.

"They would have been confiscated. And many other things—books—magazines—it's quite annoying. They would certainly have confiscated your picture apparatus. You know the Turks call it a sin to photograph the human face."

"I know that," said Harold.

"Good heavens! Our whole trip would have been spoiled!" exclaimed Jack. "It looks to me as if we need you in our business, Brother Resmop."

"Mesrop," smiled Sandy.

"I believe I can be of great service to you, young gentlemen," said the coin collector, gravely. "If you are to take pictures successfully in the Holy Land, you should be fully acquainted with the history and customs of the country."

"We have a man with us," said Harold.

"Ah, yes, a Turk. An excellent servant, no doubt, but does he know the history, the Christian traditions?"

"Are you a Christian?" asked Jack.

"Of course. I was educated at Robert College, Constantinople. Suppose you young gentlemen take me on trial for a few days. Let me show you around Jaffa—we have two hours

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before the train starts. And let me show you around Jerusalem. Then you can judge."

"What's the lay-out in Jaffa? I'd like something to eat," said McGreggor. "I've got an awful appetite. I want a steak, and fried potatoes, and chocolate with whipped cream, and hot waffles with maple-syrup, and a lot of butter."

The Syrian smiled. "I'm afraid they have n't all those dishes, but, if you young gentlemen will come with me, I'll take you to the cleanest inn in Palestine, kept by a man named Hardegg."

"Good business!" approved Jack. "Lead us to Hardegg, "Ash-car."

"Ashrag," tittered Harold.

"Arshag," corrected the Syrian.

They took a rickety carriage with a thin horse, and drove through a noisy market-place swarming with Orientals, then through a stretch of orange groves bursting with luscious fruit, and finally came to Hardegg's establishment, set down among gardens of brilliant geraniums.

"If the land of Syria is all like this, I'm certainly for it," declared McGreggor, as they settled themselves at a table among the blooms.

"It is n't," answered Telecjian. "It's very different from this. It's very dry and bare; most

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of it. Jaffa is the most famous place in Syria for fruits and flowers. It is also a place of strange traditions. It was from Jaffa that Jonah sailed just before the whale swallowed him. It was in Jaffa that Perseus rescued the fair Andromeda; you remember she was chained to the rocks?"

"Yes, yes; but how about Hardegg's eggs?" interrupted Jack.

"I want *my* Hardeggs soft," chuckled Evans.

A tempting meal with delicious honey was presently provided, and, while the boys ate, the coin collector told them about the house of Simon the tanner, one of the show places of Jaffa, where "Peter tarried many days with one Simon, a tanner, and went upon his housetop to pray about the sixth hour." Telectjian quoted the Scriptures freely.

Then came the journey to Jerusalem, four



Syrian woman bearing
water jar.

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hours up a little mountain railway (for the Holy City lies half a mile above sea level), and, all the way, the Syrian poured forth a steady stream of information. He showed them the places where Samson pulled down the temple, where Joshua stopped the sun, where David killed Goliath, where St. George slew the dragon, where Richard the Lion-Hearted fought his crusades, and where Napoleon marched his armies.

“Say, he knows everything!” exclaimed Jack, as Telecjian left the train a moment at Ramleh (home of Joseph of Arimathea) to speak to a Russian pilgrim. “He’s a wonder. But I’ll bet you can’t remember his name, Sandy. Go on! Bet you can’t say it while I count ten. One—”

Harold stopped him with a sharp glance.

“You think yourself very smart, John McGregor, but if you’d stop trying to be so funny and keep your eyes open, you might see a few things that are right under your nose.”

“What things?”

“This man that you’ve been playing horse with—I mean his name—*where* do you think he’s gone?”

“To talk to that Russian pilgrim. Bet you

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Ashcar knows six languages,—or even ten.”

Harold shook his head. “You ’re easy, Jack; you ’re the easiest boy I ever saw.”

“How d ’ye mean?”

“He has n’t gone to speak to any Russian pilgrim; he ’s gone *to send a telegram.*”

“What?”

“Yes, and he ’s not a coin collector; he ’s not a guide. He ’s been sent here by—” the boy’s face contracted in sudden anger—“by the scoundrels who stole away my mother. I ’ve been sitting at this window with the light full on him, and—*has* it occurred to you that Mr. Arshag Mesrop Telecjian wears a close-cut dark beard?”

“Great Scott!” cried Jack.

“Furthermore, there ’s a fine, white scar running across his cheek, and *he ’s got a twisted ear!*”

CHAPTER X

THE HOLY CITY

THAT evening, in their Jerusalem quarters (two large rooms at the Grand Hotel, facing David's tower), the boys held a council of war on this new situation. So already there was an enemy in camp, a shrewd, unscrupulous man sent to spy upon them. Mrs. Evans was right—they had been watched from the moment they left Cairo.

“A smooth proposition, Brother Ashrag; eh, Sandy? He 'd have worked his scheme all right, if it had n't been for your mother's letter.”

“No wonder he did n't want any wages,” muttered Sandy.

“Reckon he laughed when we tried our scheme of calling you Mr. Harold.”

“Question is, what shall we do about it? Tell him and fire him, or—what?” Sandy thought a moment.

“Jack, we *must n't* tell him. We must n't let him know we suspect anything. It's part of the

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game. As long as he thinks he 's got us, he won't be so much on his guard, and we 'll have some chance of getting *him*."

"How do you mean 'getting him'?"

Sandy's lips tightened.

"I mean almost anything in the way of doing Mr. Arshag Mesrop Telecjian up. He's the man who tricked my mother and—started this trouble. I think we 'll—hand him a few things."

Jack nodded.

"Yes, we just will. And, meanwhile, we 'll keep him as our guide?"

"Sure! keep him, and keep an eye on him, but don't let him know it. Next time he sends a telegram, we 'll find out who it 's to. And so on. See? Besides, I 'll tell Deeny to watch him, and—when Deeny watches a man, *he 's watched!*"

"What shall we do about this Greek monk?"

"Basil? We must n't do anything—yet. Basil 's our mainstay. We must n't go near him until we know it 's safe. We must n't speak his name or try to find him or anything."

"What *shall* we do?"

"Hustle the picture game. Say we 're in a hurry to get back to America. That 's true enough. We are!"

So it happened that, for a week, the boys went

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about Jerusalem apparently absorbed in taking pictures and, neither by word nor act, did they give any hint of their real purpose. Day after day the eloquent Telecjian followed them about ready with assistance and with information on all subjects. And day after day Nasr-ed-Din (who rarely spoke) kept a tireless but unobtrusive eye on the smooth-tongued Syrian.

Up to the time of this visit, Jack McGregor's conception of the Holy City had been gained chiefly from two hymns that he had learned at Sunday-school, "Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest," which was hard to sing on account of a high F sharp, and "O mother dear, Jerusalem," which he liked much better, especially when they set it to the fine marching tune and the organist got his deep pedals going.

"That was the *heavenly* Jerusalem they were talking about," explained Sandy when Jack complained of the sad contrast between this Sunday-school picture and the actual fact.

"I know," said McGregor, "but it rather jars you to find *no* water, *no* trees, *no* honey, and only goat's milk in the coffee."

"I saw a tree yesterday."

"One solitary palm!"

"There are olive-trees."

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“All covered with dust! They look like paper-trees. I wrote Dad that this town had no fire-department because there ’s nothing in it to burn. And, speaking of smells!”

“They are pretty bad,” agreed Sandy.



Outside the wall of Jerusalem.

“And mangy dogs!”

“And beggars!”

“And lepers! Remember those we saw yesterday outside St. Stephen’s gate? Ugh! Talk about a Holy City!”

“It’s a noisy city, all right,” reflected Harold.

“That’s because it’s got so many different kinds of people in it,” explained Jack. “Say,

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professor," he turned to the coin collector, "how many languages are spoken in Jerusalem?"

Telecjian thought for a moment.

"On a guess, young gentlemen, I should say about thirty. There are pilgrims from every corner of the world, Turks, Jews, Armenians, Egyptians, Persians, Abyssinians, Greeks, Arabs, Soudanese, Levantines, Kurds, Copts, Yezidees—Yezidees are devil worshipers, and all the nations of Europe."

"And all of 'em in the streets together," added Jack, "all jabbering at once, without counting donkeys braying and camel bells jangling and dogs howling and geese quacking and parrots screaming and buffaloes bellowing and fourteen other kinds of animals mixing it up in the chorus!"

In their first excursions through these tumultuous streets the boys felt themselves lost in a labyrinth whose key was beyond their finding. The ways went continually in curves and zig-zags, with up and down slantings over the four hills of the city. And the house walls were so high and so close together, that only now and then could they get sight of a landmark to steer by.

"It beats all, the way a Jerusalem street will



Underground street in Jerusalem.

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break into stairs, like a stream into rapids!" remarked Harold. "Then, the first thing you know, it dives underground through a black archway, and does n't come up again for two or three hundred yards."



The Golden Gate, Jerusalem.

Thanks to Telecjian, however, they soon learned to find their way.

"It's a small city, young gentlemen!" the Syrian explained, "only a mile across; and it is surrounded by high walls, so, whatever happens, you have only to walk straight ahead, and, within ten minutes, you will either reach this encircling wall—with its eight massive gates—or you will

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come into David Street, which runs east and west, and is tolerably wide—”

“About wide enough for two camels to pass,” put in Jack. “And the way they bump into you!”

“Or else you will come to Christian Street, which runs north and south, and is wider still,” continued Arshag.

Jack said he had no use for a city where you could n't find a ball game or a band-concert on the green or a glass of ice-cream soda; but he was forced to admit that Jerusalem offered fine opportunities for taking pictures. What types and costumes in these swarming streets! A great photographic hunting-ground! And all day long, the boys roamed over it with kodak and moving-picture machine, for Sandy, too, caught the fever.

“We'll come near to paying our expenses with the picture stuff we'll pick up here,” Jack declared.

It was not without difficulties, however, that the boys got what they wanted, for they found that, according to his religion, a Mohammedan may not have his picture taken. It is forbidden, as Telecjian had told them. But many things that are forbidden may be had and done in this land of bakshish.

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It would happen in this way. The eager photographers would seat themselves under an awn-



Street scene in Jerusalem.

ing and order Turkish coffee, or a fruit syrup. Beside them would be the camera, ready on its tripod, focussed at fifteen feet with the sun right and a suitable background. Then it was a case of

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watch the human stream and pick out what you fancy. Here comes a Bethlehem peasant in flowing rainbow garments followed by a beggar bare to the waist. Here is a stately Arab with black coil around the tasseled cloth that swathes his head. There goes a Turk from Damascus vending licorice water which he pours into glasses taken from a queer brass basin strapped around his waist.



A Turk from Damascus.

“Let’s get *him!*” Sandy whispers, pointing to the Turk.

“Good!” agrees Jack. “Oh, Ashcar! Tell that chap to stand here in the shade a minute and I’ll take his picture. I’ll give him a metallic (one cent).”

The Syrian does as directed and the Turk lifts his chin and clucks his tongue in contemptuous refusal.

“Tell him I’ll give him *two* metallics,” says Jack calmly.

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"No, it is a sin," replies the Turk.

"Very well. Tell him I'll give him *three* metallics."

The Turk answers gravely. "Man is made in the image of God. It is against the law."

"Good. Tell him I'll give him four metallics."

"My neighbors would scorn me. My wife would disown me."

"All right. Tell him I'll give him *five* metallics."

At this the Turk drops his voice to a business-like tone and says, "*For five metallics take the picture.*"

The young sportsmen, to their surprise, found even greater difficulty in getting pictures of Jews and, of course, their work in Jerusalem could not be complete without these. What studies they offered, these descendants of Abraham with their grizzled beards, their ferret eyes under bushy brows, their curled ear locks, their thin bodies forward bent, their furry hats like squirrel skins and their flapping velvet robes, purple and blue and crimson. All of these absolutely scorned the offer of metallics, although in many cases they were desperately poor.

So here the boys learned to win by strategy.

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They would wait until four o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun was looking straight down David Street. Then they would station themselves at the Jaffa gate, past which the Jews would soon be streaming. And while Harold held the kodak carelessly under his arm (but ready), Jack would point enthusiastically toward David's tower, or toward a passing camel train, or would show extraordinary interest in some close-veiled nun or Turkish soldier in his sentry-box; and all the time he would be saying under his breath:

"Steady, now, Sandy! Watch the mouth of David Street. Don't hurry! Plenty to pick from! Ah! There! Get him on the finder. Time enough yet! He's watching *me*. The sun's squarely on him. Fifteen feet. *Now land him!*"

And the click of the shutter would register another addition to their collection of human types.

In this way nearly a week passed. The boys refrained from visiting the Holy Sepulcher nor did they even inquire about the Greek monk Basil. They seemed quite absorbed in sight seeing and picture taking and more than once Jack observed with surprise that Sandy scarcely spoke

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about his father and his mother. He little knew how hard it was for his friend to keep up his reserve (maintained to baffle Telecjian) nor how many sad and anxious hours the boy passed in the silent watches of the night.



A peasant from Bethlehem.

On the evening of the sixth day Harold's patience and self-control was rewarded by a startling discovery. They were in their rooms making plans for the following morning, when there came a tap at the door, and Nasr-ed-Din appeared and said something in Turkish.

"*Peck-eyi*" ("Very good"), nodded Harold.

"Excuse me a minute, Jack. Deeny has something to tell me." And he followed the Turk from the room.

Ten minutes later, when Harold returned, his face was troubled.

"What do you think?" he began. "Here we've

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been taking a lot of pains to keep this Syrian scoundrel from knowing anything about the Greek monk and—he knows *all* about him.”

“He does?”

“He has sent him a letter, and he ’s been to see him—to-day!”

“You mean Telecjian has been to see Basil?”

“He certainly has. Deeny followed him to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher—you know the Greek monks live right next to it—and he saw Telecjian leave a letter, and—afterward he went in and stayed ten minutes.”

“With the Greek monk?”

“Yes. A Turkish soldier who took the letter in told Deeny.”

McGreggor pursed up his lips and pulled at his chin in perplexity.

“*Can* you beat that? Our biggest enemy goes to see our best friend. Maybe there ’s some mistake. Maybe there are *two* Greek monks named Basil?”

Harold shook his head gloomily.

“No. This one has a carpenter shop in the church tower. He does n’t work in it much, but he ’s got it. Deeny says so. He ’s the man Father meant all right, and—the worst of it is—”

“What? Go on!”

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“You ’d think this Basil would be a friend—to us, would n’t you?”

“He must be. Your father sent us to him.”

“You ’d expect him to be a good, kind man?”

“Sure! What ’s the point?”

“Well, he ’s about the biggest blackguard in Jerusalem.”

“Basil is?”

“Yep. Seems he stabbed a Franciscan last year at Easter time—you know they ’re always scrapping, these Holy Sepulcher monks. And he runs a fake relic factory in Bethlehem—turns out crosses and rosaries by the ton made from olive trees cut on the Mount of Olives and in the Garden of Gethsemane, but they have n’t cut an olive tree there in fifty years and there are only eight in the Garden of Gethsemane anyway.”

“Did Deeny tell you that?”

“It ’s a fact. Everybody knows it. Seems this Greek monk drives over to Bethlehem twice a week with a pair of fine horses. Oh, he ’s made a lot of money.”

“And that ’s the man your father said we must see?”

“That ’s the man. And we ’re to ask him—there you are, we don’t know *what* to ask him.”

The boy threw up his hands in discouragement.

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"Sandy, old sport, we 're certainly up against it," sympathized Jack.

Their perplexity was increased the next morning as they were standing in front of the hotel by a remark of the American consul, a man who had lived in Palestine for thirty years.

"Here comes one of the most powerful and one of the wickedest men in Jerusalem," declared the consul and he pointed down David Street.

"Who is it?" asked McGregor.

"The Greek monk Basil," said the consul.

With fascinated interest the boys observed a tall, powerfully built black-bearded man who strode by, wearing the square black hat and the black silken robes prescribed by the Greek church. His eyes were cruel, his manner was insolent. Two gaudily dressed servants ran before him to drive the crowd away. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, and would have passed without seeing the boys had not Telecjian coughed slightly at this moment.

And now an extraordinary thing happened. The Greek monk glanced up, and, as his eyes fell on the Syrian, he started violently. In an instant, his arrogant manner vanished, and there came into his eyes a submissive, almost supplicating look. Then, bowing to the coin collector



The wickedest man in Jerusalem.

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with the utmost respect, and mumbling some words that the boys did not understand, the monk strode on.

CHAPTER XI

UNDER THE DOME

AS soon as the Greek monk had disappeared, Harold questioned Telecjian about this singular happening; but the Syrian merely shrugged his shoulders and insisted that the monk must have been paying his respects to the American consul.

Harold's eyes narrowed, and he was about to make a hot reply that would have swept aside the Syrian's whole structure of false pretense, when McGreggor nudged him in the arm, and, with a meaning look, reminded his friend of the need of caution, whereupon Sandy swallowed his wrath and said nothing.

"I assure you, young gentlemen, I do not know this man. I never saw him before. Why should he bow to me?"

"By the way, Ash-rag," said Jack, good-naturedly, "I wish you'd go up to the room and fetch me down a couple of extra rolls of films. They're on the little table. I b'lieve we're go-

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ing to land something good this morning.” Then, when they were alone, “Don’t be a fool, Sandy. Don’t give yourself away. Remember what your mother said.”

“But we can’t go on with this fellow—now.”

“Why not? Strikes me this is the time to go on with him—until we know where we’re at. That was your idea—to watch him, wasn’t it? Well, why should we let him get away from us just because he’s turned out to be a bigger rascal than we thought he was?”

The wisdom of this reasoning at once appealed to young Evans, and he agreed that the thing for them to do was to go ahead with their picture-taking, as if nothing had happened.

“It gets way under my collar, Jack, but—you’ve said it, we’ve got to lay low.”

“That’s the talk, Sandy. Let this Syrian go ahead with his program—he’s got the day planned out—booked us for the Mosque of Omar, I think.”

“All right, but—something’s going to break loose, Jack, pretty soon. I feel it.”

And something did break loose much sooner than the boys imagined. It was the most serious something that had yet befallen them.

“I say, professor,” asked Jack, briskly, when

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Telecjian returned, "what is this Mosque of Omar you are going to show us?"

The Syrian shook his head sadly.

"You like your little joke, Mr. McGreggor. I'm sure you have read about the Mosque of Omar. It is one of the most beautiful, one of the most wonderful architectural monuments in the world."

"Sorry, old man, but the first I ever heard of it was the other day—from you. How about you, Sandy?"

"Why, I—I've heard of it, but—I don't remember much about it. Built by the Turks, was n't it?"

Telecjian sighed wearily.

"It was built by the Phœnicians, by the Babylonians, by the Greeks, by the Israelites, by the Romans, by the Crusaders, by the Saracens. It was built by everybody and destroyed by everybody. It's been built and destroyed a dozen times. The Mosque of Omar stands on the débris of ten civilizations. Far below the vaults and caverns that underlie it, I can show you stones such as have never since been quarried by the hand of man, single stones, thirty or forty or fifty feet long, and ten feet square."

As he spoke, the Syrian's eyes burned with a

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strange, quiet fire, and, in spite of themselves, the boys hung fascinated on his words.

“You don’t consider the Mosque of Omar more beautiful than—*what* is that church in Venice?” questioned Jack.

“St. Mark’s? Yes, I do. And more beautiful than the Doge’s Palace. I have studied them both.”

“How about St. Peter’s, in Rome?”

“It lacks the vastness of St. Peter’s, but it has a grandeur of its own and a unique charm. You’ll see for yourselves. The Mosque of Omar is the most *mysterious* monument in the world.”

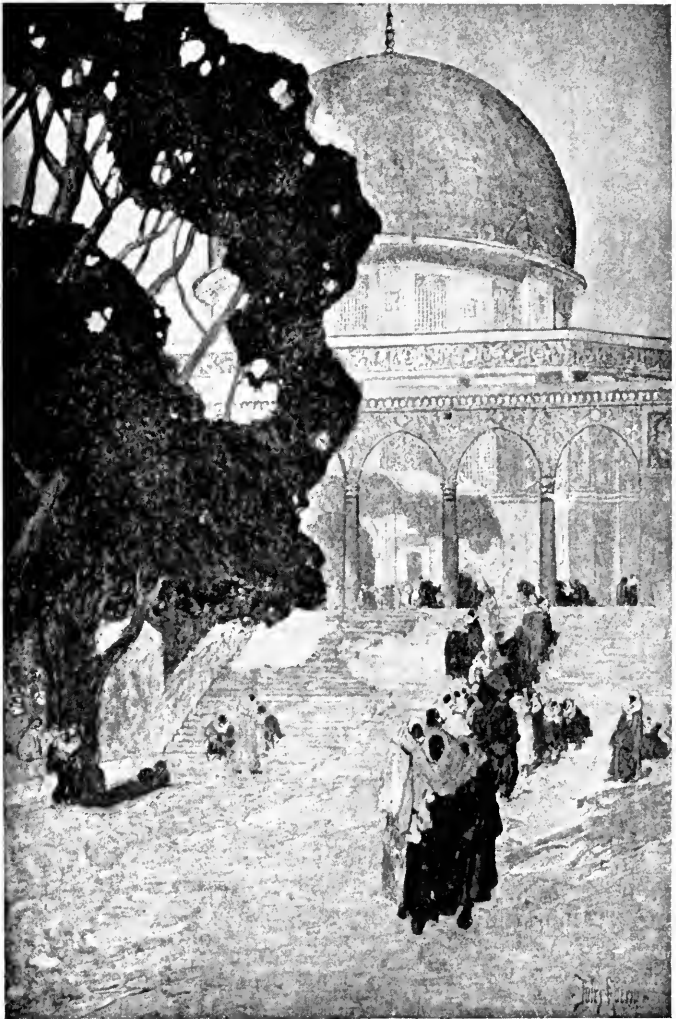
“Not more mysterious than the Great Pyramid?” challenged Harold.

“Yes; because, after all, the Great Pyramid is only a tomb, but the Mosque of Omar is—*who* can say what the Mosque of Omar is? Once it was Solomon’s temple. And, before that, it was Abraham’s rock of sacrifice. And, after that, it was Mohammed’s ascending place to heaven.”

“Say, Ash-rag, you certain deal out a great line of talk,” admired Jack.

“Are we going to see all this to-day?” asked Harold.

The Syrian bowed.



The Mosque of Omar (Drawing by Jules Guerin).

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“I have made complete arrangements. And I beg you young gentlemen to exercise great caution in taking pictures. In fact, I must advise against taking pictures at all.”

“Oh, I say!” protested Jack.

“I wish I could make you young gentlemen realize what a serious matter this is. There is nothing in the world more sacred to Mohammedans than the Mosque of Omar, not even their black rock at Mecca, which Christians are never allowed to see. They would fight for this mosque; they would die for it. They would murder Christians with the greatest joy for it. They have done so in the past and may again. So I beg you to use caution. We shall have two Turkish soldiers to protect us—I have seen to that—but, even so,—you know Mohammedans consider it a sin to take pictures.”

With such admonitions, they set forth, making their way down a narrow and filthy street at the first turn of which Telecjian paused to point out the grayish dome of the holy mosque rising imposingly before them. High it towered over the flat-roofed houses of Jerusalem, and, on the east, looked across the sad Valley of Jehoshaphat, with its unnumbered graves, toward the Garden of Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives.

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“What makes the Mosque of Omar different from all other temples,” explained the Syrian, “is the fact that it is literally built on—I should say over—a huge rock that has never been cut or polished or finished in any way except as nature



View of Jerusalem. The dome of the Mosque of Omar in the center of the picture.

finished it, millions of years ago. Above this rock the great dome rises. Encircling this rock are the octagonal marble walls that support the dome. Within these marble walls are twelve exquisite columns that encircle the rock still more closely. Everything is for the rock, the whole leveled space that covers the hill—Mount Moriah

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—where the mosque stands, the paved courtyard, the colonnades, the cloisters, the fountains, the pulpits; all of these serve but as leading up to this rock. Careful now, young gentlemen! I *beg* you to be careful. We are near the entrance.”

At the outer threshold of the temple, several white-turbaned Moslem priests came forward gravely and offered felt slippers, which the boys were required to draw on over their boots, lest their unbelieving feet contaminate the hallowed ground. Then, preceded by two soldiers and several mosque attendants, they crossed the wide courtyard, and presently found themselves under the lofty dome, the “Dome of the Rock,” as the Turks call it.

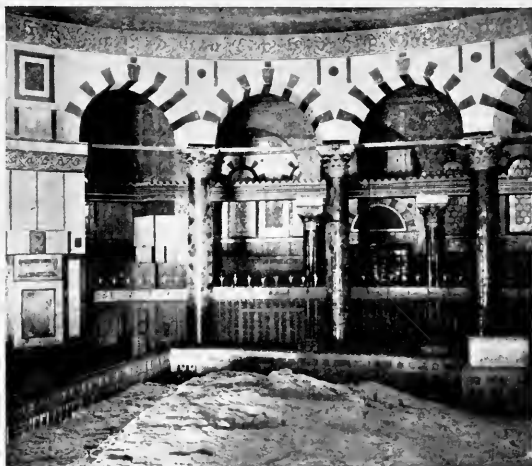
For a minute or two, neither spoke, they *could* not speak, but stood in hushed and reverent contemplation. The wonderful stained glass of the high encircling windows, the inlaid gold of the dome itself, the marble walls patterned in ancient mosaics, the Persian rugs spread around the graceful central columns, and the countless glittering lamps—all these appealed strongly to the boys’ imagination.

“Sandy, it’s *great!*” whispered Jack. “This beats anything I *ever* saw.”

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Harold nodded in silent agreement. It was very wonderful.

And now they moved forward softly to the circle of columns, and, over a gilded railing,



(Photograph by Boufils.)

The great rock under the dome.

looked upon the great, gray rock, "Es Sakhra," that has been revered as a sacred altar for thousands of years. It is a shapeless mass that spreads out sixty feet in length and forty in width, and rises some twelve feet above the floor. A crimson canopy hangs over it.

"Ever since the days of the patriarchs and perhaps before," continued Telecjian, "this rock has

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been a place of prayer and sacrifice. The Moslems believe that Abraham and David and Solomon came here where we are standing for spiritual communion with the Most High."

"Did they—did they sacrifice animals here?" asked Sandy.

"Certainly. Sheep and goats—all the temple sacrifices. The upper surface of the rock is concave, like a basin, and an opening to carry away the blood of the victims has been cut down through the rock into a cavern underneath. Mohammedans call it the 'Well of the Souls.' We will go down to this cavern now. Please do not speak!"

He turned sharply to McGregor. "My dear sir, you must not *think* of using your camera here. It would be absolute madness!"

Madness or not, this was precisely what John McGregor *was* thinking of; in fact, he was slyly getting his kodak ready, even as a frowning Moslem priest pointed out a spot in the rock, calling it a footprint of Mohammed. And, as the priest produced a golden casket containing two hairs from the prophet's beard, Jack was deciding how long a time exposure to give in this dim light.

Just what happened next was never quite dis-

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tinct in the boys' minds. They were standing in the cavern underneath the great rock, and the Moslem priest was explaining a marble tablet that commemorated some miraculous happening. Then Telecjian pointed to a narrow downward slanting passage that ran from the cavern to a series of vaults underlying the mosque, and from these, he said, into vast subterranean quarries that had supplied the stone for the temple.

"It is a strange underground region, something like the catacombs of Rome. I don't know that you young gentlemen would like to see it."

There was a suppressed eagerness in his tone that made Harold vaguely uneasy, but McGregor, who was quite in the exploring spirit, insisted that they certainly must have a look at these quarries.

"Very well," said the Syrian. "Here are candles. I will go first."

He made his way down a slippery passage followed by the boys, who, in their turn, were followed by one of the mosque attendants.

The downward slant continued for about a hundred feet, then the passage widened and continued on a level until, presently, it ended in a heavy iron-bound door.

"This leads into the quarries," said Telecjian,

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and, with a creaking of rusty iron, he swung the door open upon what seemed like a black abyss. And from this a blast of damp air blew in.

“Hold on, Jack,” called Sandy. “I don’t like the looks of this.”

“It ’s all right,” came the Syrian’s voice out of the shadows. “Careful of the steps.”

For a moment, Harold saw McGreggor, who was in the lead, stand hesitating in the black square of the doorway, then his friend seemed to stumble and plunge into the darkness beyond. There was a heavy fall, then silence.

Young Evans sprang after him in alarm.

“Jack!” he called; but there was no answer. “Jack!”

At this moment, Harold felt himself pushed violently from behind, and a crashing blow on the head hurled him forward through the doorway.

CHAPTER XII

THE QUARRIES AT JERUSALEM

AFTER a period of unconsciousness—he had no idea how long it lasted—Harold came painfully to himself again, and, opening his eyes, tried to see where he was. Absolute darkness. Absolute silence. But he could *feel* that he was lying on a rough rock surface. And his body was bruised, and his head throbbed with pain.

“Wonder where Jack is. Poor old chap! I s’pose he’s about done for, too,” the boy reflected.

Harold lifted himself slightly and rested on his elbow. He must get up and do something—go somewhere—try to find Jack. Um-m! His head did hurt!

And, suddenly, as the boy’s eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he made out vaguely the shelving outline of a cavern roof, and it seemed as if dim shadows were playing over it, very dim shadows.

Harold turned his head and saw that the shad-

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ows were more strongly marked in this direction. There was no doubt about it—somewhere near there was a light.

Evans rose to his feet and groped his way weakly and cautiously for perhaps a dozen yards along the cavern floor. Then he saw distinctly before him the outline of what appeared like the huge black trunk of a tree, rising from the floor and reaching to the roof of the cavern. It was evident that the light, whatever it was, was just behind this tree-trunk. The question was, would this light prove friendly or unfriendly? It might be the light of his enemies.

For a long time, Sandy Evans stood still, pondering this question, scarcely daring to breathe. Then he sat down and silently took off his shoes with the slippers over them—after all, stocking feet were better over rocks—and then, without a sound, he stole to the left so that he could look *around* the tree-trunk and see what was on the other side of it.

The first thing he saw was Jack McGregor lying flat on his back with his head slightly lifted as if it was resting on something, and his face very white in the light of a flickering candle. And bending over Jack was Arshag Mesrop Telecjian in his shirt-sleeves, bathing the boy's

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forehead with a wet handkerchief, and apparently trying to restore him to consciousness.

Harold came forward out of the darkness.

“Hello there! What are you doing?” he demanded.

The Syrian lifted a warning hand.

“Not so loud, please, Mr. Harold.”

McGreggor opened his eyes weakly.

“Is that you, Sandy?”

“Yes, old boy.”

Harold knelt anxiously beside his friend.

“I’m feeling about all in, Sandy. I—I got an awful crack on the head.”

“I know, Jack. I got one, too. You’ll feel better pretty soon. I did.”

He took his friend’s hand and stroked it comfortingly. Then he whispered to the Syrian, “Why must n’t I speak loud? Is any one else here?” He peered suspiciously into the surrounding darkness.

Telecjian turned and pointed to the iron-bound door, twenty feet behind them, and now tight shut.

“Well?”

“The Moslems went back after attacking us.”

Harold stared at him in surprise. “Attacking us? You mean they—they attacked you, too?”

THE QUARRIES AT JERUSALEM

The Syrian pointed to a cut and bruise on his forehead.

“What happens to me is of no consequence, but I regret exceedingly that you young gentlemen have suffered. I did my best, sir, but they were three to one, and—the attack was so sudden. It’s a great pity you tried to take those pictures.”

Jack stirred uneasily and breathed a long sigh.

“We must do something for my friend,” said Harold. “He looks to me badly hurt. He needs a doctor. He’s got to have a doctor. Can’t you make these Turks open that door?”

“Make them? No. And, if they did open the door”—the Syrian showed his white teeth in a sinister smile—“if they *did* open the door—it’s a miracle, sir, that we’re alive at all.”

“Well, is n’t there *some* way out of here?”

“Yes. There’s an opening out of the quarries near the Damascus gate, but—you understand these quarries underlie the whole city of Jerusalem. It is hard to find one’s way.”

“We *must* get a doctor somehow, and get him mighty quick,” insisted Harold, now thoroughly alarmed as he saw Jack lying so pale and still.

Telecjian rose and said quietly: “Very well, I will go for a doctor.”

Harold eyed the man in half suspicion. He

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felt sure the Syrian was a traitor, yet, in their present distress, he could not neglect this one chance in a hundred to save his friend.

“Go on! Go on then! And—listen, Telec-jian, if you get a doctor soon, you will not lose by it.”

The Syrian bowed gravely. “I will do my best. Fortunately I have two other candles and—this.”

He drew a ball of twine from his pocket and proceeded to tie one end of it securely around a large loose stone.

“What’s that for?” asked Harold.

“To lead me back to you. There may be half a mile of underground passages between this spot and the Damascus gate. I cannot be back in less than two hours. I will leave my coat—it’s folded under your friend’s head.”

Harold looked anxiously at Jack, who had not moved or opened his eyes for several minutes.

“Please don’t wait any longer. Go as fast as you can and bring a doctor back. Never mind what it costs.”

The Syrian bowed as before, and it seemed to Harold that the suspicion of a smile played about his lips, as he said: “I will leave this pistol. I trust you will not need it, but—here, sir.”

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In some surprise, Harold took the pistol, which he saw was loaded. He had several times regretted leaving his own at the hotel.

"Thanks," he said. "Now go—go!"

Telecjian bowed for the last time and moved away, unrolling the ball of twine as he went. Fainter and fainter grew the light of his receding candle, until it vanished in the far distance among the shadows. And Sandy sat alone by his friend.

He sat here for a long time, thinking. What was going to happen next? Would the Syrian come back with a doctor? Was he an absolute scoundrel? Had he himself planned this attack or been a party to it, and if so, what was his motive? If he wanted them killed, why had he taken care of Jack and gone for the doctor? Why had he left the candles and the pistol, and this line of string that might lead them safely out of the catacombs?

Sandy studied Telecjian's pistol as if seeking enlightenment in its shining barrel. Was it possible the Moslems had done this whole thing because of their hatred for Christians and their anger over the desecration of their great mosque by impious picture-taking? Was it possible the Syrian was innocent? Had he really been at-

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tacked, as he claimed? There certainly was a cut and a bruise on his forehead.

At this moment, Jack spoke, and his voice sounded stronger than before. "Say, Sandy!"

"I'm here, Jack. What can I do to help you? I wish I could do something."

"You have. You've shown that—you care."

"I do, Jack."

"Thanks, old boy."

He held out his hand, and Sandy took it, clumsily, saying, "I hope he gets that doctor here."

"I'm not going to need any doctor. Honest, I'm not. I was over the ropes for a while, but—I'm all right. And, anyway, there won't be any doctor."

"What?"

"Our friend won't come back. He's skipped. I *know* he won't come back."

"You can't know it, Jack."

"Yes, I can. Arshag Mesrop Telecjian won't come back because he's got what he wanted. You called me easy one day. Well, we're both easy now. That Syrian has done us up. It's tough to be robbed twice in ten days, but that's what's happened to us. *He's got our money, Sandy.*"

CHAPTER XIII

THE TICKING OF A WATCH

HAROLD stared for a moment as if he thought Jack's mind was wandering, then, in sudden alarm, he pressed a hand to his right side, then to his left side, then he tapped carefully around his waist, as if searching for something.

"By Jove! you're right, Jack!" he cried in blank dismay.

After their misadventure in Cairo, the boys had purchased chamois-skin money belts, and had folded their bank-notes in these, strapping them securely around their bodies. And now the money belts were gone.

"When did you miss your belt?" asked Sandy.

"Oh, after he started away—a few minutes after—when it was too late," grumbled Jack. "My alleged brain could n't have stood the pressure of thinking of it *before* he went away."

"How about *my* alleged brain?" mourned Har-

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old. "You were down and out, but I might have been on the job."

"You were thinking about that doctor and—me. Don't go back on yourself, Sandy. We could n't have done anything, anyway."

"Why not? I could have held him up with this pistol."

Jack shook his head.

"You would n't have had the pistol if Brother Mesrop had n't seen that you did n't know the money was gone. He only gave it to you just at the last."

Harold frowned in perplexity.

"I don't see why he gave it to me at all."

"It was a bluff."

"How a bluff?"

"The whole thing was a bluff—giving us the pistol, and bathing my forehead, and unwinding the ball of string. Ten to one, he dropped that string before he got half-way out."

"Why should he make a bluff?"

"He wants us to think he had nothing to do with this robbery."

Harold was still unconvinced.

"I'm not standing up for Telecjian, Jack, but if we're going to fight him, we've got to understand his game, and—your idea is that he was a

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side partner of those Turks, but he does n't want us to know it?"

"Side partner? He hired 'em. It was his job."

"How about that cut on his forehead?"

"Part of the bluff. He probably did it himself."

"And you think he went off with our money?"

"Why, there is n't any doubt of it. His game is to do us all the harm he can. If he gets our money, he leaves us *'broke'*—bankrupt. We can't do a thing, can we?"

Sandy was silent a moment, thinking.

"You're wrong, Jack. The Syrian's game is to watch us—that's what Mother wrote. Even if he has our money, how does he know we can't get more? How does he know we would n't use that eight hundred dollars we left in Cairo, if we *had* to, and repay it later?"

Jack could not restrain a little smile at this concession, but he said nothing, and Harold went on quickly:

"What I'm trying to say is that Telecjian won't dare to leave us, because he wants to keep solid with us; he wants to stay in our service. That's the easiest way for him to watch us, is n't it? Why, your own argument proves it;

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he made this bluff about going for the doctor so he can come back *with* the doctor."

"After he's gotten rid of my money somewhere outside?" put in McGregor.

"Well, I suppose so."

"He'll have an awful nerve to come back when he knows we'll find out that our money is gone."

"He'll be terribly sorry; he'll say the Turks took it. And we can't prove they didn't, unless—" Evans wrinkled up his brows in perplexity. "Wait! Let's think this out straight. It isn't a question of getting the best of an argument—I'm ready to chase after that Syrian this minute, if you say so, but—do you mean to tell me seriously, John McGregor, that Telecjian gave me a loaded pistol at the very moment when he had our money on him? Do you?"

"Why not, if he saw you didn't suspect him?"

"He couldn't be *sure* I didn't suspect him. There was always a chance that I might have held him up with that gun, and, if he'd had the money *on* him, he wouldn't have taken that chance."

McGreggor was impressed by this reasoning.

"If he didn't have the money on him, then—where *is* the money?"

Again Sandy sat silent, with a half-dreamy

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look in his eyes; then, suddenly, his face brightened.

“What if Telecjian took the money and—hid it, while we were unconscious?” reasoned Evans. “Then—*then* he would n’t have been afraid to hand me the pistol. See?”

Jack grasped at this new thought. “You mean—the money is somewhere about here—now?”

Sandy nodded mysteriously. “Unless I ’m way off in my calculations.”

“And—we ’re going to find it?”

“We ’re going to try mighty hard—if you ’re able to navigate.”

“Navigate? Well, if you ’ll show me how to find that money, I ’ll ‘navigate’ all right. Just watch me.”

With an effort Jack rose to his feet.

“Good boy!” exclaimed Harold.

“That shows what a little encouragement will do. Now, where ’s the money?”

“I don’t say absolutely that we can find it, but—here ’s the way I figure it out,” replied Sandy. “*If* Telecjian hid the money, he did n’t hide it far from here, because he did n’t have time. Let ’s see.” Harold looked at his watch. “It ’s only an hour and a quarter since we left the hotel. It doesn’t seem possible.”

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"Hello! You've still got your watch," noticed Jack.

"Of course. Have n't you?"

Jack shook his head. "It's gone—with the money belt. Solid gold, too."

"Never mind. We'll get it back," declared Harold. "I suppose he scorned my old Waterbury. The point is, we were n't unconscious more than five or ten minutes. We *can't* have been when you think of all that's happened since we left the hotel, and only an hour and a quarter for it to happen in."

"All right, suppose we were unconscious only five or ten minutes, what of it?"

"Don't you see? That gave the Syrian only ten minutes at the most to go through our clothes and hide the money. So he *can't* have gone far. I believe we'll find everything within a hundred feet of this spot."

Jack's eyes brightened admiringly.

"Sandy, you talk like a detective story!"

"Does it sound crazy? Does it, Jack?"

"Crazy? It sounds fine! One hundred feet from here! My money belt with nine hundred good dollars in it is only a hundred feet from here! 'Whistle and it will come to us, my

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lad!" and whistling cheerily, he peered around among the shadows. "A hundred feet away, you say? That's a circle two hundred feet across. Can't you make it smaller, Sandy?"

But Harold was already at work on a pile of heavy stones, throwing them back one by one, and searching underneath.

"Get busy, Jack, if you can. Light this extra candle, and look under loose stones. We'd better work around in regular order, so as not to do the same pile twice."

"Say, Sandy! Do you think it's safe to burn both candles at once? What'll we do when they're gone?"

Harold looked meditatively at the two candles.

"Light her up, Jack. They're fairly long and fairly thick. They'll burn two hours, easy. We can risk half an hour looking for this money. If we have n't found it in half an hour, we'll blow out one candle. Now hustle!"

Jack lighted his candle, and the boys went to work.

At the end of half an hour, they faced each other, weary and discouraged. They had searched faithfully, and found nothing. In vain they had turned over every loose stone within the

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radius agreed upon. After all, there were not so very many stones, for much of the cavern floor was comparatively smooth.

"Nothing doing, old boy," sighed McGregor and Harold saw that his face was pale.

"You're tired, Jack. Sit down and rest."

"Got plenty of matches, Sandy?"

"Yep."

Jack blew out his candle and sat down. He leaned against a stone column and closed his eyes. Ouf! Those chaps certainly had given him a crack on the back of his head!

Meantime, Sandy continued his search, moving away from Jack in increasing circles. Where *could* Telecjian have hidden those money belts? And Jack's gold watch? Not on the cavern floor, for they had looked everywhere. Not among these queer roots of trees that crept like long snakes between fissures in the rock. He had felt behind every one of them. Nor in these niches in the stone columns. What a lot of columns there were! It was like walking through a frozen, black forest. He wondered what the niches were for. Perhaps for little lamps that the quarrymen must have used. He would ask about this.

At this moment, Jack called to him, and his

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voice resounded strangely through the vast cavern.

“Oh, Sandy!”

“Right-o!”

“Come here, will you?”

Harold went quickly to his friend, who was still sitting propped up against the stone column.

“Anything wrong?” he asked, anxiously.

“I—I don’t exactly know. I wish you ’d sit down here by me. Put your back up against this stone column—just the way I am.”

It was an odd whim, but Harold yielded to it, and, seating himself on the cavern floor, he backed up obediently to the column.

“Now what?” he asked.

“Press your ear against the stone—like this. I may be crazy, Sandy. P’r’aps that crack on the head broke something inside, but—*do you hear anything, old man?*” he asked.

Sandy listened intently for a few moments.

“I hear you breathing, and I hear my Waterbury ticking.”

“Hang the Waterbury! Give it to me. I’ll go over there. I’ll take the candle so you can’t hear it sputter. Now try it.”

Jack took the Waterbury from Evans and walked away about twenty feet; then he waited

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breathlessly while Sandy pressed his ear against the column.

“Go farther away,” called Sandy. “I can hear the Waterbury.”

Jack moved ten feet farther away, and waited as before.

“Now try it.”

“That’s funny,” muttered Sandy. “I can hear the Waterbury still. Go farther away.”

“I’m thirty feet from you now,” said Jack. “You can’t hear a watch tick thirty feet away. Besides, I’ve pressed the winder so it’s stopped. You don’t hear it *now*?”

“Yes, I do!” insisted Harold. “I hear it distinctly!”

“But I tell you it’s stopped. It is n’t ticking. You can’t hear a watch tick when it is n’t ticking. There! You can see for yourself.”

He went back quickly to his friend, and showed him the Waterbury, which had undoubtedly stopped.

Harold looked at the watch in surprise.

“That’s so! It *has* stopped!” he admitted. Then with a cry of sudden understanding, “I’ve *got it!* Don’t speak! Don’t move!”

Once more Harold pressed his ear against the stone column while Jack waited.

THE TICKING OF A WATCH

Then Evans sprang to his feet.

"It's true!" he shouted. "You're *not* crazy! There *is* a watch ticking here—not my Waterbury, but your own gold watch that Telecjan stole."

"Where? Where is it?"

"Somewhere near this column. Don't you see, the ticking sound carries better through rock than through air? We studied that in physics."

"Yes, but where is the watch?"

Again Harold pressed his ear against the stone column.

"It's plainer than it was. That's because—that must be because I'm standing up," he said.

"How so?"

Sandy thought a moment.

"I must be nearer to the ticking standing up than when I was sitting down. The watch must be somewhere *above* the floor. See?"

He held the candle over his head and scrutinized the surface of the stone column.

"It sounds as if it was *inside* the stone," he went on. "Hello! what's this? By Jove! it *is* inside! Look, Jack!"

Sandy pointed to a hole in the face of the rock about six feet above the floor. This hole was

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two or three inches in diameter, and was stuffed with earth.

“See here! It goes right through the column; it must be a yard long.” He sprang round to the other side. “Here’s where it comes out—blocked up with dirt the same way. We’ll dig the dirt out, and—hold this candle! There!”

Working rapidly with his pocket-knife, Harold presently cleared the opening, and, reaching in two fingers, he drew forth something that shone yellow in the candle-light.

“Your watch-chain, old boy!” he cried. “*And* the watch! And here comes one of the money belts, and—here’s the other!”

“Great Cæsar!” exclaimed McGregor, stunned by this sudden good fortune.

“*Now* you see the value of a college education!” said Harold, triumphantly. “If I had n’t studied physics—”

“Physics—nothing!” exclaimed Jack. “Who was it heard that watch ticking, anyway?”

“You heard it, my son, but—you thought you were crazy, whereas I, being a scientist—Never mind, Jack! *We’ve got everything back!*”

“Right-O! We have! I wonder what that hole in the column was ever made for?”

“We’ll ask Telecjian.”

THE TICKING OF A WATCH

McGreggor shook his head.

"We'll never see Telecjan again."

"Bet you we see him within an hour. He hid the money, didn't he? He'll come back for it, won't he? By the way, let's open these belts, and see if everything's O.K."

"Maybe he's left us a diamond necklace," grinned Jack.

A brief examination showed that their valuables had not been tampered with, the bank-notes were just as the boys had left them, nine hundred dollars in one belt, and three hundred in the other.

"That being the case, and it's great luck," remarked McGregor, "I am strong for getting out of this old cistern."

"Cistern! There are miles of it."

"Then we want to move quick, Mr. Scientist, before these candles burn out."

"All right," agreed Sandy. "We'll follow this string."

The boys set out forthwith along the trail left by the Syrian, Harold leading the way with a lighted candle.

The string ran on through the forest of stone columns, in and out of huge rock chambers where swift bats twittered up and down vast, shelving ways, until it ended in a clear, crystal spring that

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gushed out of the rock. Here the string stopped abruptly; it had been tied fast to a stone and left there.

“Ah! Look at that!” sniffed McGregor. “I told you he ’d never come back. This is how he leads us out of the labyrinth.”

Sandy studied the situation.

“Maybe you ’re wrong, Jack. Maybe he ’s brought us here so we ’ll have water to drink, and—he probably knows just where this spring is, so he can come back to it.”

The boys found the spring-water very refreshing, and rested here for a few minutes, seating themselves on a broken column.

“It ’s a funny old place,” said Jack, wiping his mouth. “Hello! What ’s that?”

From somewhere in the distance came the sound of footsteps, approaching footsteps that echoed through the cavern. And presently, from the mouth of an arched passage about a hundred yards up the shelving rock, appeared a torch borne by a man wearing a red fez.

Quick as a flash Harold blew out his candle.

“Don’t speak! Don’t move!” he whispered. “It ’s a Turk.”

The boys peered anxiously through the shadows, and presently made out a second man in



The boys peered anxiously through the shadows.

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European dress, and, as the light of the torch fell upon him, Jack started in surprise.

“Why—why it’s Arshag!” he exclaimed. “You win, Sandy. He *did* come back.”

But young Evans was looking ahead with a puzzled expression.

“No, I don’t win. I meant that Telecjian would come back of his own accord, and—he has n’t, Jack. *He’s been brought back!*”

“Brought back?”

“See that Turk grab him by the arm and march him along? Telecjian has come back because he *had* to come back, and—don’t you see who the Turk is? It shows that I must have been rattled not to recognize him at first. It’s Deeny—*Deeny on the job!*”

CHAPTER XIV

“THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO”

WITH shouts of joy, the boys revealed their presence, and, a moment later, Telecjian rejoined them, voluble in protest against the brutal treatment he had received from Nasr-ed-Din.

The Turk stood by, grimly indifferent. His orders had been to watch the Syrian, and he had watched him. He had seen Telecjian sneaking out alone from the quarries through the hole near the Damascus gate (after having seen him leave the hotel with the two boys), and had held him up forthwith, none too gently, and then marched him back through the black cavern, resolved to find out what had become of his master.

“*Choke cyi*” (“Very good”), approved Harold.

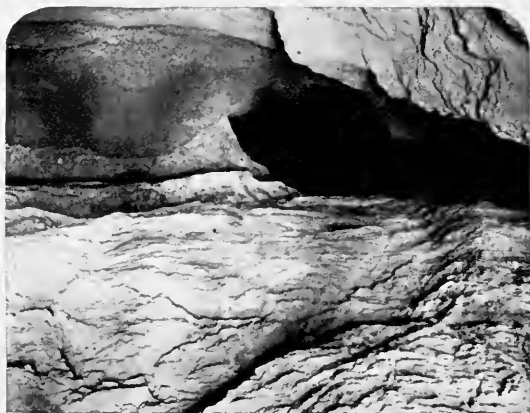
“I don’t see how Deeny happened to be right there by the gate when Ashcar popped out,” pondered Jack.

“How does a short-stop *happen* to be where the

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ball is coming? Because he knows his business. Eh, Deeny?"

The Turk's eyes brightened at Sandy's smile; but Telecjian's face was black.



Entrance to quarries near Damascus gate.

"It's an outrage!" he muttered. "I was hurrying for the doctor."

"Yes, you were—*not!*" sniffed McGregor.

Harold glanced sharply at the Syrian and started to speak, but checked himself as if with a new idea.

"Deeny! Look here!" he said, and, taking Nasr-ed-Din to one side, he spoke to him earnestly in Turkish. The servant listened with

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nods of understanding, and, presently, his homely face lit up exultantly.

“*Haidee, ghit!*” (“Now hurry!”) finished Harold, with a quick gesture, whereupon the Turk



The Damascus gate.

made his usual salaam, lifted his torch, and moved rapidly away.

“Where have you sent him?” asked Jack.

“I’ll tell you in a minute,” answered Harold. “He’s going to bring some stuff to eat—for one thing.”

Telecjian looked inquiringly at the boy.

“You wish to eat—here?”

“Why not?”

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“But—it ’s not far to the Damascus gate. We can be back at the hotel in half an hour.”

Evans studied the coin collector without speaking, and his young face seemed to grow set in a new and serious purpose.

“Sit down, Telecjian, I want to talk to you. Sit down, Jack.”

He pointed to a broken column.

“There ’s a big question to be settled here,” Harold resumed when they were seated, “and—we ’re going to settle it right now. Telecjian, I ’m only a young fellow, and you ’re a man, but—in the first place, don’t forget that you loaned me your pistol, and—I ’ve got it—here in my coat-pocket.”

Telecjian pulled nervously at his black beard.

“I—I don’t understand. You young gentlemen suspect me unjustly,” whined the Syrian. “I have been your friend. I have done my best to—”

“Stop!” interrupted Harold sternly. “Answer my questions. When you spoke to us that day on the boat, and said you wanted to work for us, what was your idea?”

“I needed the work.”

“No other reason?”

“No, sir.”

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“Were n’t you employed by some one to follow us? Now then?”

The Syrian flinched but controlled himself.

“No, sir,” he answered quietly and there was a look of reproachful sadness in his dark eyes.

“Did n’t you organize this attack on us to-day so as to—to get our money?”

“No, sir.”

“Huh!” snorted Jack. “Then where *is* our money? Our money belts? And my gold watch?”

The coin collector opened his eyes in innocent amazement. “You don’t mean to say they are—gone?”

“Come here, Telecjian,” ordered Harold and, pointing accusingly to the hole in the stone column he explained about finding the money belts there, but the wily Syrian insisted that this only proved his innocence, for, if he had stolen the money, would he not have taken it away with him?

Equally plausible was his explanation when the boys pointed to the labyrinth string that ended at a rock. Telecjian declared that he had left this string purposely, there by the spring, where he could easily find it and had thus saved precious time in his pursuit of a doctor.

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“Say,” mused Jack, “I wish I knew the Turkish word for liar.”

“Yalanji,” supplied Sandy.

“Yalanji! Fine! Now, brother Ashrag, I have the honor to inform you that, as a *yalanji*, you’re a corker. I’ve met *yalanjis* from all parts of the world, but I never struck one with such a magnificent, three-ring, diamond belt, open championship *yalanjiness* as you’ve got.”

Telecjian’s scowl deepened and Harold stared off absently among the shadows.

“What time is it, Jack?” he asked.

McGreggor held his watch towards the candle flame.

“A quarter to one. . *Did* you say something about eating?”

“Deeny ought to be back,” muttered Evans and they all fell into expectant silence.

Five minutes passed and it seemed a long time, then five minutes more and presently, from far up the slope of rock they made out Nasr-ed-Din’s faithful torch flaring towards them and, a moment later the huge Turk was standing by the spring, his face radiant and his broad back bent under two heavy sacks. In one hand he held a carefully tied basket.

“THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO”

“There ’s the stuff to eat, in that basket,” said Harold, “but—wait, not yet.”

Long afterwards Jack remembered how young Evans looked, there in the wavering torch light, as he stood with hands clenched and head thrown forward like a football captain ready for a desperate play. The Syrian, too, remembered this picture of boyish resolve—he had reason to remember it.

“Telecjian, we ’ve talked enough,” began Harold in a low tone. “You ’ve had your chance to tell the truth and you haven’t taken it. Now I ’m going to make you tell it. I know more than you think, and I ’m going to know the rest. I ’m going to know—” the boy’s voice broke under the strength of his emotion and, bending, white-faced, close to the Syrian, he held out a menacing fore finger, “I ’m going to know why you tricked my mother that day—lied to her there at the pyramid.”

Telecjian stared blankly.

“Your mother? I never saw your mother.”

“Oh!” cried Harold angrily. Then he motioned to Nasr-ed-Din.

The big Turk sprang forward eagerly and, seizing the two sacks that he had brought, he dragged them towards a low, narrow archway

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that opened near the spring. Behind one sack a white powdered trail spread over the rock, behind the other, a brownish trail.

Telecjian bent towards the cavern floor and examined this dust.

"Lime and sand!" he mused.

"Yes, and you know what they make—mixed with water," flashed Harold.

"Mortar!" answered the Syrian.

"And you know what that makes—spread over stones? It makes a *wall*, Mr. Telecjian. You see that archway? It's going to be walled up, and—you're going to stay behind it!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack.

The Syrian's lip curled scornfully.

"If you think you can frighten me with a foolish threat—"

"Threat? It's a fact. It's the surest fact you know. You've been fighting me, and—I'm going to fight back. My father and my mother have been made prisoners by the scoundrel you work for. Now it's my turn, and—oh, you think it's funny! It makes you laugh! Ha, ha! It makes me laugh, too. Ha, ha, ha! Did you ever read a story by Edgar Allan Poe called 'The Cask of the Amontillado?' No? You'll enjoy it—some day."

“THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO”

“Sandy!” gasped McGregor. “You don’t really mean to—to wall him up?”

Young Evans nodded grimly. “It’s the only way. I’ve thought it all out. You know what he’s done to us this morning. Well, if we let him out, it will be worse. Our lives won’t be worth five cents. He’ll send a warning to the man above him, and—where will my mother be? And my father?”

“That’s so,” reflected Jack. “Say, I’ll take a look at his new quarters.”

McGreggor caught up the torch, and, passing under the archway, found himself in a low, vaulted chamber about twelve feet square. There was no way out of this chamber except through the archway.

“Go in there!” ordered Harold, turning to Telecjian. “Deeny!”

The Syrian hesitated, but, as Nasr-ed-Din strode toward him, he yielded, scowling, and passed inside.

“Now we must fetch stones and pile ’em up. Hustle, Jack.”

For half an hour, the boys worked zealously, carrying loose stones, which Deeny, with skilful trowel, mortared into a solid wall that grew foot by foot before their eyes, until it had risen to the

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shoulders of Telecjian, who stood behind it in sullen silence. Then, for extra safety, the Turk rolled up two great bowlders and braced them against the base of the wall outside.

"It's queer that he does n't say anything," whispered McGregor, and the Syrian, catching the words, bared his teeth.

"You'll hear from me later on," he snarled. "Don't think I am disturbed by this—this cheap trickery."

Harold went close to the barrier, and, leaning across the unfinished wall, looked his adversary straight in the eye.

"Telecjian, I'm sorry to treat you this way, but you've made my mother suffer, and—*I'm going to know all that you know about my mother.*"

"What should I know about your mother?"

The boy waved aside this reply.

"Listen! This wall will be built up solid except for two small openings, just big enough to let in air and food and water. Nasr-ed-Din will watch here until the mortar is set. He will leave you food and water, and some straw to sleep on, and I'll come back to-morrow—after we've seen the Greek monk."

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At this, Telecjian started violently, and his sal-low face became white, like clay.

“The—the Greek monk?” he stammered.

“Yes, the Greek monk, Basil. Why, what’s the matter, man?”

Even as Harold spoke, a most extraordinary change had taken place in the coin collector. All his defiance and insolent bravado had suddenly left him, and now it was a despairing, terror-haunted creature that stared at young Evans from across the wall.

“You—you are not going to tell Basil that I—that I am here?” he gasped.

“Why not?”

“No, no, no!” the Syrian screamed in a frenzy of fear. “You must not do that! You *must* not, sir. You don’t know what it would mean.”

“What would it mean?” demanded Harold.

“I’ll tell you everything, sir, if—if you’ll protect me from Basil.”

Jack gave a long, low whistle of surprise, and turned to his friend.

“We’ve got him going, Sandy,” he whispered.

“Tell me about my mother,” ordered Evans.

Telecjian hesitated, then, speaking low, he began his confession.

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"It's true I—was paid to—get your mother inside the pyramid."

"Ah! You hear that, Jack! Then you know where my mother is? You know why she was made a prisoner? Do you?"

"No, sir, I don't know that. I swear to you I don't know that, but—" he hesitated again.

"But what?"

"It's true I was—paid to follow you."

"And you planned this attack on us to-day? *Did you?*"

Here Telecjian launched into a voluble explanation, but Sandy stopped him. He wanted facts. Had Telecjian planned this attack? Yes or no? Then haltingly, shamefacedly, Telecjian admitted that, acting under orders which he dared not disobey, he—well, yes, he had.

"Ah! And who gave the orders?"

"They came by cable, sir."

"By cable!" murmured McGregor. "I was cracked on the head by cable!"

"Who sent this cable?" pursued Harold.

The Syrian was trembling with fright.

"A—a man in Cairo,—high in authority, but—"

"What is his name?"

Here Telecjian quite lost control of himself,

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and begged frantically, with tears in his eyes, to be spared the necessity of naming his employer. It would do the boys no good, he declared, and would utterly destroy him. If they would only trust him—this once—he would prove his gratitude, he would render them precious service, he would show Harold how to find his mother, but —“no, no, no!” he *could* not betray his employer.

In vain the boys reasoned and threatened. The Syrian faced them stubbornly across the wall, and shook his head. He would not give the official’s name.

“How are you going to help me find my mother,” stormed Evans, “if you won’t tell me who is keeping her a prisoner?”

Telecjian began another long reply, but Harold cut him short.

“Stop! You promised to tell me everything, and now you’re holding back the best information you’ve got. Don’t talk any more. It’s no use. I’m going to leave you here until to-morrow. Maybe you’ll have more sense then. Come on, Jack. Deeny will finish this wall. Come on.”

An hour later the boys were safely back in their rooms at the Grand Hotel, and Arshag Mesrop Telecjian was not with them.

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"There was nothing else to do," frowned Harold. "We had to leave him there; we *had* to do it!"

Seeing his friend's anxiety, McGreggor tried to answer lightly.

"Don't worry, old boy. A little rest won't hurt Brother Arshag. He'll have a nice, straw bed to sleep on, and enough to eat, and—it's a lot cooler down there than it is here on David Street."

But Evans's face remained serious.

"Jack, that fellow is bad all through, tricky and treacherous. If we had trusted him and let him out, as he wanted us to, he'd have turned on us in a minute."

"Sure he would."

Harold picked up a pencil and began idly scribbling with it, and for some moments the two were silent.

"Say, Sandy?" said McGreggor, presently.

"Well!"

"Do you know what puzzles me? It's the way Telecjian went to pieces when you sprung the Greek monk on him. He's afraid of this Greek monk, but—the Greek monk is afraid of him! We saw that when they met—did n't we?"

"Ye-es."

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Harold was playing with his pencil. His eyes were half shut, as if he were studying some distant object.

“It’s a tangle, Jack. I don’t understand it, but the thing for us to do is straight and plain. We’ve got to obey orders—just go ahead and do what my father said.”

“See this Greek monk, you mean? But he’s a scoundrel: Deeny says so.”

“We’ve got to see him just the same. That’s what we’re here for.”

“He’s the wickedest man in Jerusalem, the American consul said so.”

“I know, but—I’m backing my father against Deeny and the American consul ten times over. *He knows!* And he said that we must see this monk. That’s the last thing my father told me to do, Jack and—” Sandy’s voice caught as he choked back his feelings, “and that’s what my mother wrote in her letter that we must do, so—so we’ll do it.”

“All right, old boy,” agreed Jack; “we’ll do it.”

CHAPTER XV

THE HOLY SEPULCHER

AFTER eating a hearty luncheon in the hotel dining-room (the basket of food had been left at the quarries for Telecjian), the boys decided that it would be well for them to rest in their rooms for a couple of hours before braving the Greek monk.

“Try to get a little sleep, old fellow,” said Jack, sympathetically, as he noticed Harold’s pale face. “It will make a lot of difference.”

“All right. Meet you at four o’clock—in the courtyard,” answered Sandy.

But Sandy Evans did not feel like sleeping. He was troubled in his mind, full of fears and somber fancies. How would this struggle end? What chance had two boys in a strange, far-off land with enemies all about them? Suppose they were attacked again! Suppose they fell ill! Suppose—suppose his father had made some terrible mistake in sending them to this wicked

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monk, Basil! Suppose he was never to see his father and his mother again!

From these torturing thoughts the boy tried vainly to rouse himself. What was the matter with him? He was desperately sad and lonely, and—and yet he did not want to see Jack. It seemed as if he was getting too much of Jack.

“I’m in one of my cranky fits,” muttered Sandy. “I’ll get up and do something.”

He looked out of his window over the spread of blue and white domes that fill the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem, and, as he blinked in the sun’s burning glare, he remembered his purpose to buy one of those cool, white linen pugrees that the tourists wear flapping down from their cork helmets, to protect themselves against the heat. There was a shop in Christian Street where he could buy one of these, and—yes, he would buy two, one for Jack.

This pugree transaction occupied Harold only a few minutes, and left him an hour and a half before four o’clock. What should he do? As he glanced down Christian Street with its noisy swarm, his eyes fell upon the square, stumpy tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. And, straightway, there came into the boy’s mind his father’s message—“*You must go to*

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Jerusalem and find the Greek monk, Basil, who has a carpenter shop in the tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and ask him to—”

Ask him to—what? What could he ask of the wickedest man in Jerusalem? And yet he must obey his father's command. The time had come to solve this mystery. Here was the tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He had waited all these days on account of Telecjian, but there was no reason to wait any longer. Telecjian could make no more trouble. Perhaps the monk was in the tower now. He might ask for him—there was no harm in asking, and—

With strange feelings, Harold drew near the sacred building. A flight of narrow steps led him down to a stone-paved courtyard swarming with beggars, and peddlers, and Russian pilgrims—sad-eyed women with shawls over their heads, and big-bearded men, counting their beads with looks of devotion as they moved toward two heavy wooden doors where a white-turbaned Moslem in long, purple garment stood indifferently on guard.

Harold pressed forward with the throng, and was surprised, as he entered the edifice, to come upon a group of Turks squatting on a divan at the left, lazily smoking their chibouks, without

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Crowd of pilgrims at Church of the Holy Sepulcher.
Foot washing ceremony.

paying the slightest attention to the crowd of entering Christians, except, now and then, to cast looks of scorn or derision at them.

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Presently, Harold found himself face to face with a man of cheery countenance, whose smile was so kindly that the boy was prompted to speak to him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he hesitated; and then he blushed in embarrassment, for, observing the man's apparel, he discovered that he had addressed a member of some priestly order. There was the long, girdled garment of coarse, brown cloth, and the heavy sandals with bare feet inside.

"What can I do for you, my young friend?" replied the other. "I am Brother Nicodemus, one of the Franciscans."

"Oh, thank you," murmured Harold. "I'm an American—er—I wanted to ask—er—"

He stopped awkwardly, not knowing what to say.

"Is this your first visit here?" inquired Brother Nicodemus.

"Yes, sir, and—er—I suppose you know all about the Holy Sepulcher!"

The Franciscan smiled.

"I ought to. I have been here for three years."

"You mean here in Jerusalem?"

"I mean here in this church. I live here. Ah, no wonder you look surprised! This is a strange

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building, with all sorts of wings, and garrets, and queer corners. Up-stairs there are living-rooms, a dozen beds—more than a dozen. Besides that, scores of pilgrims sleep on the stone floors every night. They are locked in.”

“Why is that? Why are they locked in?”

“Because the Turks will have it so. You know the Turks own everything here. See that tall fellow in purple near the door? He is the guardian. He

locks those big doors after sunset, and then nobody can go out or get in until he unlocks them in the morning. If he feels like it, he passes in food for the pilgrims, that is, he sells it to those who are able to pay. See those round holes in the door? That’s what they are for.”



Turkish guardian of Holy Sepulcher locking doors.

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"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Harold.

"Doubtless there is much you have never heard of if this is your first visit. I don't suppose you know that Adam is buried here?"

"Adam?" stared the boy. "You mean—Adam and Eve?"

Nicodemus nodded good-humoredly.

"I don't know about Eve, but we are taught to believe that the father of all men is buried—over there—to the right of those arches. If you like, I'll show you the place."

Young Evans thanked the Franciscan, and was presently gazing at this most venerable tomb. Then Nicodemus showed him other extraordinary things, a stone that is said to mark the exact center of the universe, a pillar that perspires and is supposed to cure diseases, and many startlingly intimate scenes of the Bible story.

Harold looked and listened in amazement.

"How can they know the very spot where all these things happened?" he marveled.

"That's a hard question," smiled the Franciscan. "I don't think I'll try to answer it. The fact is, I must ask you to excuse me now. I have my duties at the Garden of Gethsemane. I take care of the flowers there, and of the old

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olive-trees. Stop and see me some day. I will show you Methuselah."

"Thank you," said Harold, puzzled by this



Franciscan in Garden of Gethsemane.

ancient name. "I suppose Methuselah is—er—"

"Methuselah is my pet cat," laughed Nicodemus. "He's a fine, big Angora. Well, good-bye."

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“Good-by, sir. You’ve been very kind.” Then, remembering what he had forgotten for the moment, “By the way, did you—did you ever hear of a Greek monk named Basil?”

The Franciscan’s face hardened, and he eyed the young American in sudden suspicion.

“Basil? Yes, I’ve heard of him—very often.”

“He has a carpenter shop in the tower, has n’t he?”

“Yes, but he never works there now. He has a relic factory in Bethlehem that pays him better.” Nicodemus spoke scornfully. “Why do you ask about Basil?”

“Because I—I want to see him,” said Harold.

“Oh! You’ll have to go to Bethlehem for that. Of course it’s not my affair, but I warn you to be very careful if you have any dealings with that man.”

At this moment, the swell of an organ caught their ears, and the sound of distant chanting.

“It’s the Russian pilgrims—there—up those steps—on Mount Calvary.”

Harold stared at his guide. “Is that Mount Calvary?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Nicodemus, and, with another good-by, he hurried away, leaving Harold thoroughly perplexed.

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Now, in spite of the throng, the boy felt again that depressing sense of loneliness and helplessness. If there was only some one to advise him, some one wise and kind to whom he might tell his troubles. He followed along absently in the crush of worshipers, past rows of huge, painted candles higher than a man's head that rise in golden candlesticks at the entrance to the Holy Sepulcher. And, in his turn, he passed through a low door, and entered the white marble Chapel of the Angel, where endless pilgrims bend reverently over the rock that they believe was rolled away from the tomb and press fervent kisses on the glass that covers it.

Presently he stooped through another small door, and came into the innermost sanctuary, where forty-three lamps of silver and gold burn ceaselessly, and where every stone has been hallowed down the centuries by the tears and prayers of countless worshipers.

Harold's face was white as he came out again into the body of the church. His heart was swelling with emotion. He felt that he should do something in keeping with the solemnity of the place and the seriousness of his own situation. But he did not know what to do.

The Russians were still chanting—there at the

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left. It seemed queer to call that little place Mount Calvary. Harold had always thought of Mount Calvary as a great, green hill. How well he remembered the words of that beautiful hymn, "There is a green hill far away, without a city wall." He could almost hear the appealing voice of the contralto as she used to sing it in the choir, and now they showed him, as Mount Calvary, this corner of a church that was certainly *inside* the wall.

Slowly the anxious boy climbed the narrow stone steps that brought him to the pilgrims. He recalled with misgivings that he had neglected to say his prayers a good many times lately. Perhaps that was the trouble. Perhaps he would get more help if he asked for more. It was being so much with Jack McGreggor that had made him neglect these things. Jack was a boy who never spoke of religion, never thought of it, probably. All he cared about was making jokes, and taking pictures, and getting a lot to eat.

Suddenly Harold thought of his appointment at four o'clock, and looked at his watch. It was half-past four! How the time had gone! He was just turning to withdraw when a venerable Russian pilgrim, with high cheek-bones and white, flowing beard, lifted his hand; whereupon

THE HOLY SEPULCHER

the chanting ceased, and, with one accord, the whole band of men and women, their eyes shining with devotion, knelt down upon the stone floor. There was a moment's silence, then, in a deep, rich voice, the leader began to recite the Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father who art in Heaven."

Harold knew enough Greek to understand the words, and they went straight to his aching heart. He could not resist the power of that kneeling company. They were queerly dressed people, poor people, but they were getting the kind of help and comfort that he needed, and, with a blessed sense of relief, the boy dropped on his knees, and, closing his eyes, joined in the great appeal. If God would only help him to find his father and his mother—and would save them from all harm—and would give him wisdom and courage to—to do what was necessary.

Soothed and strengthened, Sandy rose to his feet. It was all clear to him now—he must have faith. That was all he needed. He must be sure, as his mother was sure, that they were guarded and guided by some higher power, then everything would come out right. Of course he must do his best, too, and—he was sorry he had had unkind thoughts about Jack.

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Suddenly Harold started forward. Why—what an extraordinary thing! Then he drew back, moved cautiously toward the steps, and then stole quickly out of the church. A most extraordinary thing, indeed! He had seen John McGregor kneeling among the pilgrims!

CHAPTER XVI

THE RED DOOR

EARLY the next morning, the boys set out for Bethlehem in pursuit of the Greek monk. They expected to be back in Jerusalem that same evening, but Deeny had quoted a wise Turkish proverb to the effect that the rising sun never knows what the setting sun will see, and this gave Harold the fortunate inspiration of providing Telecjan with food and water for three full days. Which, as it turned out, saved the imprisoned Syrian from suffering.

In addition to Nasr-ed-Din, the young Americans were attended on their journey by a highly decorative dragoman named Amurath Gargulio, who, with his pearl-handled short sword, his gilt tassels, and his wide, blue sash, looked like a comic-opera villian. Amurath provided four horses and his own services for the immense honor of serving two such "vair disteenguish American gents," so he declared, and then stood out for three liras (twelve dollars) for the ex-

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curcion, but allowed Deeny to bargain him down to one and a half—after much lively parleying.

It is a beautiful four-mile ride from Jerusalem to the City of David, and the road is fairly good. Carriages travel over it, and squeaking bullock carts, and donkey trains, and camel caravans, besides picturesque peasants and weary pilgrims, trudging along bravely through the dust and heat. From all of these the young horsemen, as they passed, received respectful salutations, which made them feel like two princes of the blood. Indeed, they presented quite an imposing appearance in their helmets and pugrees, their fresh linen suits, and their neatly strapped riding-leggins.

It was not until they had covered about half a mile that Jack confessed that he had never sat on a horse before.

“You see I’m pretty good on a bicycle,” he puffed, “and I figured that a horse would be like a bicycle with a—a jiggle wheel at each corner, only—there’s a lot of up and down motion. Whoa there, you brute!”

Harold tried not to smile.

“Grip him tighter with your knees and—don’t let him jounce you over his neck. Sit back. That’s better.”

THE RED DOOR

“I’ll be all right if I can only—Whoa there! If I can only get the hang of these stirrups.”

As they passed along, Amurath pointed out the famous pools of Solomon, three great rock



Rachel's Tomb.

reservoirs built thousands of years ago to supply water to the Holy City; also a small white-washed building by the roadside that is known as the tomb of Rachel, and is much revered; also various scenes from the familiar stories of David and Ruth.

“What a lot of wonderful things!” marveled McGregor.

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“Here ’s the most wonderful of them all,” said Harold, a moment later, as they reached the top of a rise of ground. “Pull up, Jack, and look over there. In all the states, under all the stars and stripes, we have n’t got anything as wonderful as that little town; that ’s Bethlehem.”



A distant view of Bethlehem.

On the crest of the hill, the boys drew rein and looked down on a picture that an artist would have loved to paint, a spread of pleasant harvest-time colors, yellows and browns of the ripe grain fields, greens of the pasture, and deeper greens of olive orchards dotting the landscape down the gentle valley and reaching up the purple hills beyond,—hills that bore proudly on their shoulders the snow-white City of David, now out-

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lined clearly against the blue of the southern sky.

“So that is Bethlehem!” murmured Jack, and then fell silent, for what is a boy to say at such a moment—or a man either, for that matter?

They rode on a little way without speaking, and presently Nasr-ed-Din came clattering alongside on his big gray horse, with an important piece of news which he communicated eagerly to Harold, pointing to a low building with a white dome that rose in the distance across a waste of stony ground.

“What is it? Wh-what’s he saying?” asked Jack, tugging at his horse. “Tell me, Sandy.”

“Deeny’s been talking with a donkey driver back there, and—it seems this donkey driver knows all about Basil, the Greek monk. He says we’re apt to find Basil over there. See that little white dome?”

“W-well?—Whoa, there!”

“It seems there’s something queer about it. I did n’t quite get the idea, only—Hello! What’s the matter with *you*?”

Harold turned sharply to the dragoman, who was edging up to them on his horse, and listening with evident uneasiness.

Amurath stammered forth a confused explana-

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tion as to why they must be hurrying on to Bethlehem.

“Don’t you worry, my friend,” answered Harold. “We ’ll get to Bethlehem all right, but—I want to know about that building. See? The one with the white dome.”

The dragoman shot a queer, sidelong glance at Harold, and, at the same moment, Jack saw him clutch nervously at an amulet of blue beads that hung from his horse’s bridle. This amulet was supposed to keep off the evil eye.

“It ees nothing, sair,” he declared, and then went on rapidly to say that, if they would ride ahead a short distance, he would show them a miraculous spring in a wonderful cave.

But the boys cut him short. They had seen caves enough to last them for some time. Besides, they were interested in this building with the white dome, and proposed to have a look at it. In vain the dragoman tried to dissuade them from this purpose. His arguments and excuses only strengthened their determination.

“Come!” ordered Harold. “No more talking. We’re going to ride over there—right now.” He turned his horse from the road toward the waste of stony ground.

“No, no!” cried Amurath, his eyes wide with



"I want to know about that building. See? The one with the white dome."

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fear. "You must not go, sair. It ees—it ees vair dang'russ."

"Ah! Then you do know what it is?" put in Jack.

"Yes, sair, I—I know," confessed the troubled servant, but he would not reveal his knowledge, only insisting that he "muss perfect two such vair disteenguish Amurican gents."

"Don't you worry. We can look after ourselves," replied Harold. "Come on!"

At this Amurath threw up his chin and clucked his tongue in solemn refusal. He would not go. If the young gentlemen insisted on going alone, he could not prevent it, but—the risk must be on their own heads.

Whereupon the young gentlemen, with some impatience, decided to take the risk, and the end of it was that Amurath remained stubbornly behind at the roadside, fingering his blue amulet and following the boys with looks of gloomy foreboding as, accompanied by Nasr-ed-Din, they set forth for the mysterious white dome.

"It's queer—the way that fellow acts!" muttered Harold, as they guided their horses in and out among jagged boulders.

"He's probably just lazy," suggested Jack.

A short distance farther on, they came upon

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two girls clad in coarse garments of blue and green—the typical Bethlehem costume—who were gleaning in the stony harvest-field as poor women have gleaned for centuries in this ill-nourished land. Thinking to gain some information from them, young Evans drew in his horse, and, holding up a piece of silver, beckoned to the girls. They came forward laughing, and, throwing back their white veils, stood, half-embarrassed, half-amused, while McGregor noticed strings of silver coins braided in their dark hair.



A Bethlehem girl.

"Shu nek bina dir?"
("What is that building there?") questioned Harold in his pleasantest manner, as he pointed to the white dome.

It was a simple question, but it produced a startling change in the two girls. In an instant, their smiles and friendliness vanished, and,

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without further thought of the proffered money, they drew their veils over frightened faces, and, springing away, ran across the field as fast as they could go, crying, "*Altun At! Aman! Altun At!*" ("The golden horse. Oh! the golden horse!")

"What's the trouble? What are they shrieking about?" asked McGregor.

"I have n't the least idea," replied Harold. "'*Altun At*' is Turkish for 'the golden horse,' but what a golden horse has to do with this is more than I know."

Here Nasr-ed-Din came forward with an explanation. His keen eyes had been studying the low building, now only a few hundred yards distant, and had made out the figure of a golden horse surmounting the dome.

"Deeny's right!" agreed McGregor, looking through his field-glass (they were really Telecjian's). "I see a golden horse and a golden rider."

"Maybe it's a big weather-vane," suggested Evans, "but I don't see—"

He paused, frowning, while Jack thoughtfully screwed down his field-glasses and put them back in their case.

"Neither do I. Why should those girls be

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afraid of a little gold man on a little gold horse?"

"There 's somebody there besides the little gold man," muttered Sandy, and his lips tightened as they drew near to a heavy iron-bound gate in a massive stone wall that surrounded the building.

McGreggor lowered his voice. "You mean—Basil?"

Evans nodded. "That 's what I mean. If Deeny 's got it straight, we 're going to see the man we 've been looking for, and—Jack—old boy—you 're with me?"

Harold's face was pale, and there was just the slightest quiver in his voice as he held out his hand to his friend. The great moment had come. Something was about to happen, and both boys knew it.

"I 'm with you, Sandy," answered McGregor, and he leaned forward along the neck of his mount to clasp Evan's hand; but just at that moment the gate in the wall swung open, and three huge wolf-dogs rushed out, showing ugly, white fangs, and snarling fiercely. Jack's horse shied and reared back suddenly, with the result that the boy certainly would have been thrown had not Nasr-ed-Din come to the rescue.

Harold, meantime, had sprung to earth, and quickly gathered up some large stones. Then,

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waiting until the dogs were almost on him, he hurled these stones with sure aim.

“You brutes!” he shouted. “There! And there! Now, then! Ah! It’s all right, Jack. See ’em run.” Evans watched the dogs as they scurried back through the gate, yelping and limping.

And now, stepping forward resolutely, the boy lifted his riding-whip and struck the handle three times in sounding summons against the open portal. Jack was close behind him, while Nasr-ed-Din came last, leading the horses.

Presently a red-eyed, frowsy-looking servant in peasant’s costume, his bare feet thrust into wooden shoes, came shuffling forward, and showed them into a stone courtyard with arches and doors opening out of it. Through one of these doors came the sound of shrill talking, through another a wailing song.

“Is the monk Basil here?” began Harold in Turkish.

The servant stared in dull surprise.

“Don’t you understand? I want the Greek monk Basil. What do you speak? Arabic?”

The servant continued to stare, then, presently, he moistened his thin lips and answered in Eng-

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lish, a kind of slow, far-away English that he might have learned in a book.

“You—wish—to—see the—monk Basil?”

“Certainly,” said Evans sharply. “He’s the head of this place, is n’t he?”

“Yes—sir.”

“Well, he’s here, is n’t he?”

Again the servant did not answer, but, pointing to a door under the nearest archway, he backed down the courtyard, keeping his eyes fixed on the Americans in fascinated interest.

“He’s a queer chap,” reflected Jack. “I s’pose he means that our friend Basil is in there where he pointed.”

“We’ll soon find out,” said Harold, starting toward the archway; but scarcely had he taken two steps in this direction, when he was stopped by a heavy sound, and turning, he saw that the gate in the massive wall had been closed. And before the gate stood a formidable fellow wearing a black astrakhan hat, a purple jacket embroidered with silver, and under this a yellow silk vest across which ran diagonally two rows of shining cartridges. At his side hung a pair of daggers, and, carelessly poised over his arm, was a Remington rifle.

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“A Xeibeck!”¹ muttered Harold.

“A *what?*” asked McGregor.



A group of Xeibecks.

“Wait! Deeny! Come here,” beckoned Evans.

¹ The Xeibecks are described by the Reverend Edwin M. Bliss, in his book on Turkey, as a tribe of fierce mountaineers in Asiatic Turkey, noted for their lawless ways.

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Still leading the horses, Nasr-ed-Din came forward over the flat stones, and stood before his master, watching the man at the gate, meantime, out of the corner of his eye.

They spoke in low tones, the boy and the grizzled Turk, and it seemed to Jack that Nasr-ed-Din was appealing to Harold to leave the place.

“Sandy, what is he saying? Does he think we ought to get out of here? Tell me,” said Jack.

“It does n’t matter what *he* thinks. *We’ve* got to do the thinking,” answered Evans, and he gave quick instructions to the Turk. “I’m telling him to wait here with the horses while we go inside. He’s armed, and—if that chap tries to start anything—well, you know what Deeny is.”

“Yes, but, Sandy—”

Evans turned gravely to his friend. “Jack, you know what we’re here for,” he said; and there was something so inspired in his look that McGreggor’s protests ceased; he felt himself thrilling with his friend’s brave spirit. After all, this was what they had come for, to see the Greek monk; upon this depended their chance of finding Dr. Evans.

“All right, old boy,” answered McGreggor, and he followed Sandy through the gloomy archway.

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The boys now came into a small, dimly lighted chapel whose walls were painted in dull red and gold. At one end, before a battered altar, two candles were burning in tall candlesticks. No one was in sight.

"Stay here," whispered Evans.

Moving softly, he pushed aside a leather-bound curtain and came into a sort of alcove recess. At one side of this was an iron-barred window and beyond these bars he discovered a youth of slender figure in a richly embroidered garment. This youth stood perfectly still, his eyes fixed on the boy in wistful wonder and Harold noticed on his fingers a number of costly rings.

Sandy was about to question this poor prisoner when his ear caught the echo of angry words in the courtyard and he hurried back to McGregor.

"What is it? What's the trouble?" he asked quickly.

Jack was listening, white-faced.

"I—I don't know," he trembled. "You can't see out of these windows. They're too high."

Harold rushed to the entrance, but the door was barred against him.

"Deeny!" he shouted, rattling the lock.

The only answer was the sound of a struggle

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outside with confused cries, the stamping of frightened horses, the snarling of the wolf-dogs, then a shot.

“Deeny!” the boy shouted again with all his strength. “Deeny!”

And now, above the tumult, Harold made out the voice of his faithful servant lifted in a desperate cry: “*Aman Effendi! Jannini kurtar!*” (“Dear master, save yourself!”)

Then there fell a silence, while the boys stared at each other with ashen faces. What had happened? What was going to happen?

At this moment, a small window on the other side of the chapel was pushed up cautiously, and the frowsy servant climbed in, panting.

“This way! Quick! You can—escape!”

Jack rushed to the window.

“We ’d better go, Sandy.”

Sandy Evans stood still, his hands clenched, his breath coming quickly. He was afraid. There was danger all about them. Deeny had fallen. Jack was ready to leave him, and—the boy was about to spring toward the window when, suddenly, something steadied him. He thought of his mother. He remembered her tender blessing there by the pyramid: “*And us to Thy service.*” Perhaps this was *his* service. Perhaps this was

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to be the test of his faith. If so—well, he breathed a quick little prayer for strength that he might not fail. Then he turned to the servant.

“Wait!” he said. “Did you tell the Greek monk that I want to see him?”

“Yes, sir, but—” the man shot a frightened glance towards a small red door in the chapel wall.

“Is he in there?” asked the boy.

“Yes, sir, but—”

“Come, Sandy,” pleaded Jack.

“I’m not going,” said Evans in a quiet voice.

A heavy tread sounded from beyond the red door and seemed to be coming towards them.

“Quick, sir!” begged the servant.

McGreggor’s lips were white.

“I—I can’t stand this, Sandy,” he stammered and, springing into the window, he wriggled his way through and disappeared outside. The servant followed him, leaving Sandy Evans alone, his eyes fixed steadily on the sinister red door.

There was just a second’s pause, then, driven by some strange power within him, Harold moved toward the door. He knew he was going to open it. He knew that nothing now could keep him from opening it. He felt his heart

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pounding, and—with a last effort, he turned the knob and strode forward.

Immediately the boy found himself in a wide, vault-like chamber lighted by two flaring torches that projected from niches in the stone walls. In the middle of this chamber stood the bearded monk Basil in his black robes and black hat—Harold recognized the cruel face that he had seen the day before in Jerusalem. And, beside him, were two Xeibecks.

Basil's face darkened at the sight of the young American.

"How dare you come in here?" he burst out in English. "I'll show you what it means to force yourself upon me." He spoke rapidly to the Xeibecks, who bowed in grim understanding, and advanced upon young Evans.

"*Gheuturiu!*" ("Take him!") roared Basil.

"Don't touch me!" said Harold. "I'm an American citizen. My name is Harold Evans. I'm the son of Wicklow Evans. You know all about him, and I've come here to ask you—"

The boy paused for breath, and at that moment there came a startling change in the monk's expression. It was as if he had suddenly remembered something that he wished to forget, something that filled him with extraordinary agitation.



"Don't touch me!" said Harold. "I'm an American citizen."

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“Wait!” Basil ordered, and waved back the ruffians. Then, with his hard, black eyes fixed on Harold, he stood silent, breathing heavily and twisting his beard in his thick, white fingers.

“You—you came here from Cairo?” he asked hoarsely.

“Yes.”

“You went inside the Great Pyramid—did you? You—found something there? Tell me, boy.”

“I found a message from my father,” answered Harold. “He told me to come to you.”

The monk gave a gasp, and clenched his fists so hard that his whole body trembled.

“It’s true!” he muttered. “It must be true!” Then, as if still doubting, “Why did you go inside the pyramid? *Why?*” His eyes were troubled with a haunted, anxious look.

“My mother sent me there,” the boy said quietly. “She dreamed this message was on the wall. It was n’t exactly a dream. She—she *knew* it was there.”

“A vision!” whispered Basil, and, lifting his black hat, he wiped the perspiration from his brow. Then, in a low tone, with all his arrogance gone: “I have tried to frighten you; I have tried to drive you away, but—you are a

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brave boy; you are your father's own son, and—now I must tell you everything.”

Harold stared in utter amazement at this incredible change in the strange man that he was facing.

“You mean you will tell me—about my father?” he cried.

“I will tell you everything you wish to know, but—not here—at Bethlehem. Come!”

With a gesture bordering on humility, Basil swung open the heavy door, and pointed the way to the courtyard.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MONK'S CONFESSION

BASIL and Harold passed out into the courtyard, and there found Nasr-ed-Din groaning on a bench. Poor Deeny! He had fought with all his heart and strength, and had only yielded after being shot in the arm, and finally clubbed into submission.

"Somebody's going to pay for this!" burst out Harold, as he stood beside his faithful follower.

Basil smiled bitterly.

"Yes," he agreed; "somebody is going to pay heavily. *I* am going to pay."

At this moment, there came a pounding on the courtyard gate, with a sound of excited voices outside. And, above the tumult, rose a voice that Harold recognized, calling, "Sandy! Sandy!"

"John McGreggor!" shouted Harold, hurrying to the gate, and, a moment later, Jack rushed in, followed by a crowd of peasants, men and boys, armed with sticks, stones and knives.

"Come on! *Haidee! Haidee!*" yelled McGreg-

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gor, making the most of his Turkish, and brandishing a pistol. "Sandy!" He stopped short, white-faced and panting, as he saw his friend. "Sandy! They—they have n't hurt you?"

"I'm all right, Jack. Deeny's the one that's hurt. There!" He pointed to the wounded Turk.

"I'm ashamed of myself, Sandy, the way I—went off and—and—left you," stammered McGreggor. "I got so rattled and—and—I was so scared, I—" He looked down shamefacedly, shifting from one foot to the other, and kicking awkwardly at the pavement stones.

"Cheer up!" said Harold. "You were n't half as scared as I was. I did n't have legs enough to run."

"Honest?" Jack smiled faintly at this comforting admission. "You don't mean it—do you?"

"Honest. Say—where did you get your army?"

"Picked 'em up—in the fields around here," grinned McGreggor. "Shook some money in their faces and made 'em understand I wanted 'em to help me clean out this place. Can't we do it, Sandy? I want to make good somehow."

"You have made good!" declared Evans.

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“Did n’t I see you sail in here like a conquering hero? It is n’t your fault if the queerest thing in the world has happened.”

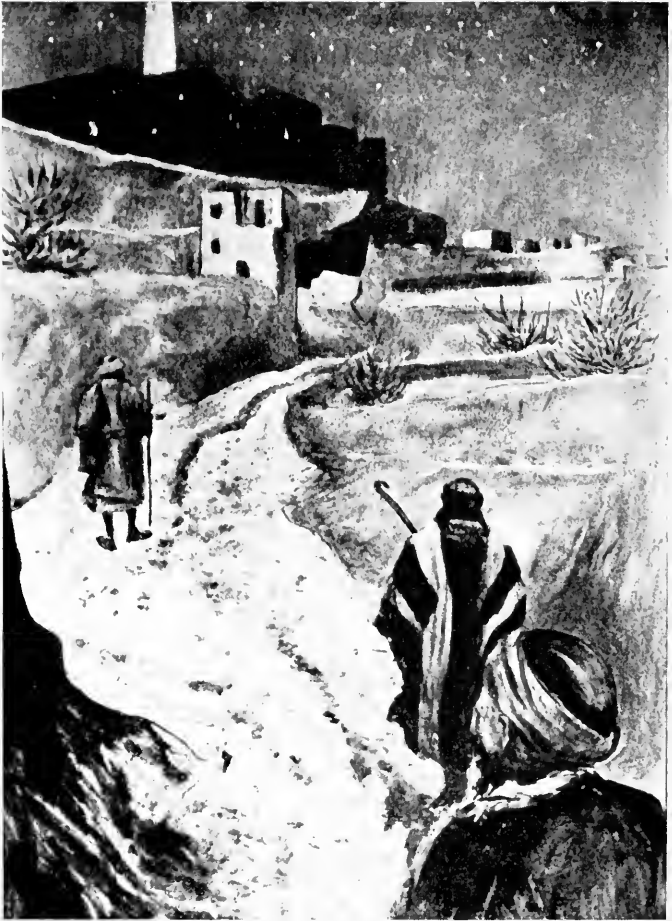
Then Harold took his friend aside and related his experience with the Greek monk.

McGreggor shook his head incredulously. “He ’s up to some queer game or other. If he ’s going to tell you everything, why does n’t he do it?”

“He will, but—he wants to go to Bethlehem first. Then he ’ll tell us,” said Harold, confidently. “You ’ll see.”

So it came about that Harold and Jack (having disbanded McGregor’s army), rode on to the clean and smiling village, the City of David, that spreads its white houses among gardens and vineyards terraced up the sides of a rugged hill. With them rode Nasr-ed-Din, despite his pain and scorning the offer of a seat in the monk’s carriage. It was joy at finding his young master safe that had given the Turk fresh courage. His wounds were nothing, he declared.

Having left their horses at a Russian convent near the Church of the Nativity, and having put Deeny, much against his will, into the hands of a one-eyed Arabian doctor, the boys followed Basil to his house, one of the largest and most preten-



Peasants approaching Bethlehem at night.

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tious in the town, standing in a garden of date-palms just beyond the famous "Milk Grotto." Here, in a spacious room with comfortable divans ranged along the walls and quite bare of chairs, as is the custom, they listened with tense interest to the monk's confession.

"All my troubles have come," Basil began, "because for years it has been my duty to deal with peasants and pilgrims so ignorant and superstitious that they will believe anything you tell them. For instance, there is a cave near this house called the 'Milk Grotto'; we passed it just now. According to tradition, the chalk in this cave has miraculous health-giving properties, so I hit upon the idea of digging out chalk anywhere in the surrounding hills, and selling it as coming from the Milk Grotto."

"But this has nothing to do with me," interrupted Harold impatiently. "You promised to tell me about my father."

"Wait! I will tell you everything, but it must be in my own way. This business, you understand, was a fraud, but it brought in money—a great deal of money—and—it led me into other frauds. I was a poor carpenter at this time, with a little shop in the tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher."



They listened with absorbed interest to Basil's confession.

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"I know," said the boy.

"I soon neglected that work and devoted myself to my new enterprise. I also began manufacturing crosses and rosaries supposed to be made of olive wood from the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane but really made of any olive wood. Then I took charge of the place where you found me. It is a sort of hospital where people are kept who are weak-minded, and I saw a way to make more money here by pretending that a great saint came in the night on his golden horse and cured some of these people. The idea was that this saint worked his cures in cases where the friends and families of sick persons brought purses of gold or bags of grain and gave them to me. In this way I completed my fortune and increased my power until everybody hated me and feared me."

Here a silent servant appeared with Turkish coffee, and the boys sipped this fragrant beverage from egg-shell cups that rested, native fashion, in other cups of hammered brass.

"About a year ago," resumed Basil, "there was brought to me and—er—put in my charge an American gentleman who—"

"My father!" cried Harold, starting to his feet. The monk bowed gravely. "It is true. Dr.

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Wicklow Evans, your father, was brought to me—a prisoner. And I kept him in that place where you saw the golden horse. Please sit down.”

“My father!” repeated the boy, in a half-daze. “What have you done with my father? Tell me! Tell me!” he demanded.

“I have promised to tell you everything, sir, but—please sit down.”

“Sit down, Sandy. Give him a chance,” urged Jack.

“I—I’ve got to know one thing right off. Is my father—is he alive?” Harold’s breath came hard as he waited for the answer.

“Yes.”

“Is he—is he here—in Bethlehem?”

“No.”

“But you know where he is? You’re sure you know where he is?”

“I am sure I know where he is.”

With a sigh of relief, the boy settled back on the divan, and Basil continued:

“I may as well explain why I am telling you this, and why I did not use force against you this morning, as I might easily have done. It was because of a promise made to your father while he was with me. I made this promise on my return from a journey to Jericho, a miserable place in

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the Jordan valley. You will pass that way going to see your father, and I warn you against the flies. Their bite is deadly.

"Well, one of these flies bit me on the forehead, just between the eyes, and I had an ugly sore there with a swelling that grew worse and worse, until both my eyes were involved. I was in terrible pain, and the Jerusalem doctor feared I would lose my sight. Then your father said he could help me, and—within three days he had cured me."

"Father can cure almost anything!" exclaimed Harold, proudly.

"Without going into details, you understand I had not treated Dr. Evans kindly, and he had returned good for evil. At first I hated him for being so cheery and forgiving. But, as the days passed and he was always the same, always anxious to help and never complaining, I could not resist his influence, and—I saw that one of two things must happen; either he must leave this place where I saw him constantly or I must change my whole life."

"It was your conscience waking up?" ventured the boy.

The monk was silent a moment, and when he spoke again, it was in a gentler tone.

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“Perhaps, but—my conscience went to sleep again. I did not propose to have my prosperous business interfered with, so I arranged to have Dr. Evans taken away to—another place. It was impossible to be in his presence day after day and not grow to love him and—and wish to be like him. Your father understood why I was sending him away. He said the seed was growing in my heart. He said that some day I would give up my wicked life and—do right. He said that there was no other way to be happy. I laughed at him, but—I was uneasy.

“Then there was another thing. Your father declared he would not be a prisoner very long. He was sure he would be back at his work in Adana in a few months. I said it was impossible, he was closely watched, he had no chance to send a letter, and none of his friends knew where he was.

“‘My wife will find me,’ he said, ‘or my old servant, Nasr-ed-Din, will find me, or—my boy will find me.’”

Harold’s face was radiant as he heard these words. His father trusted him! His father knew that his son would not fail him!

“Oh!” he cried, “did my father say that?”

“Many times; and I always laughed at him.

THE MONK'S CONFESSION

'How can they find you?' I said. 'How will they ever know where to look for you?'

"'God will guide them,' he answered, and then he told me of a strange thing he had done at the Great Pyramid. It seems that, after he was taken, he was secreted for a short time in one of the five chambers of the pyramid, and—you know about the message he wrote there?"

"Yes, yes," replied the boy, impatiently.

"I don't see how Dr. Evans happened to mention you in that message, Mr. Basil," objected Jack. "Did he know you then? Had he ever seen you?"

"No, but the men who captured Dr. Evans told him he would be taken to Jerusalem and put in my charge, so he knew my name. And he prayed day and night that his wife or his son or his servant might be led to the pyramid, and might read his message.

"I told him this was ridiculous. 'Do you imagine that any prayer of yours, here in Bethlehem,' I said, 'can make people journey thousands of miles to a little dark room in Egypt that they never have heard of?'

"'I do,' said he. 'Prayer can do more than that. You will believe in it some day, my friend.'

"It was then that I made the promise. 'Doc-

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tor,' said I, 'if your prayers *should* accomplish that, if they *should* bring your people to read this message, and then lead them to me—'

"'Then what?' your father asked, and I felt his strong power dominating me.

"'Then I will help those who come!' I said, and it was like a vow.

"The next day, Dr. Evans was taken away that was ten months ago. I have not seen him since. I have tried to forget him. I have gone on with my old life, but—the promise stands. The impossible thing has happened. Your father's prayers *have* been answered. You are here. You need help. Very well, you shall have it. It will ruin me, it will drive me out of the country, but—I will keep my promise to your father."

Harold faced the monk in perplexity.

"Why will it ruin you to keep this promise? Why will it drive you out of the country?" he asked.

"Because the—person who had your father brought here is powerful—terribly powerful. When he finds that I have betrayed his trust, my life won't be worth *that*," the monk snapped his fingers.

"But—it seems to me you betrayed your trust

THE MONK'S CONFESSION

long ago," objected Sandy. "You say you have n't seen my father for ten months. That does n't look like guarding him very well."

Basil nodded grimly. "Your father has been guarded well enough. You will find that out, young man, when you—when you try to see him."

Now swiftly Harold put the all-important question: "*Where is my father?*"

Both boys expected that the monk would meet them here with denial or evasion, but the answer came straight and prompt: "In the convent of Mar Saba."

"Mar Saba?" repeated Evans.

"Mar Saba?" echoed Jack. It was plain that neither of them had ever heard of the place.

"It is down in the Dead Sea wilderness, about twenty miles from here," explained the monk. "It is built like a fortress against a precipice, with a great gulf beneath. It has stood there for fifteen hundred years."

"You say it's a convent?" questioned Jack. "I thought a convent was a place for women."

Basil explained that a convent is a community for either men or women and said that Mar Saba was occupied by some sixty Greek monks who lived there entirely apart from the world, spending their years in prayer and meditation.

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“Does the person who sent my father to you,” asked Harold, “the one who is so powerful—does he know that my father is at Mar Saba?”

“No.”

“He has not found it out in all these months?”

“No. You understand that this—person does not live in Palestine.”

“I suppose he lives in Egypt?” suggested McGreggor.

“Never mind where he lives, and—don’t ask who he is. I have promised to help you find Dr. Wicklow Evans; that is all I have promised.”

“That ’s enough,” said Harold.

“If you follow my directions, I believe you can succeed; but it will not be easy. The head man at Mar Saba who guards your father is a cunning fellow. He knows my secret, he discovered it, and I have had to pay him heavily—more than half of what I receive. He will not easily surrender so valuable a prisoner.”

Again the silent servant appeared with coffee, after which Basil took up the practical matter of the boys’ journey to Mar Saba.

“The Dead Sea valley is a wild, fever-stricken region infested by robbers,” he said. “Many travelers have been held up there and plundered. You must know the dangers and be prepared to

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meet them. I will arrange everything, will help you, and see that you have the best possible chance of finding and rescuing Dr. Evans, on condition that you wait two weeks in Jerusalem before you start. You must promise that. And, of course, you will say nothing about meeting me or receiving any assistance from me?"

The boys readily agreed to do this, whereupon Basil made a movement as if to end the interview.

"One moment, please," said Harold, with the eager earnestness that John McGregor had often admired. "This is a big thing you are doing for us, Mr. Basil, and—don't think me impertinent, but—I *wish* you'd tell me why you want us to wait two weeks."

The monk shook his head. "You must not ask that."

But Sandy Evans persisted. "As you don't want to tell me, may I make a guess? You're going to leave the country? You're going to get on a steamer that will land you in Italy, or Spain, or maybe America—some place where you'll be safe from this man who is so powerful. Is that it?"

The monk hesitated. "You're a clever boy," he said finally.

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"I only put two and two together, but—see here, I don't believe you have to leave the country. Why can't you stay right here where you belong, and—not run away."

Basil looked wonderingly into the strong young face before him, into the steadfast gray eyes that met his unflinchingly.

"Don't move!" he said. "Stay like that—just a moment. It's extraordinary!"

"What is?"

"How you look like your father—*now!* And you talk like your father."

"He's a chip of the old block," laughed Jack.

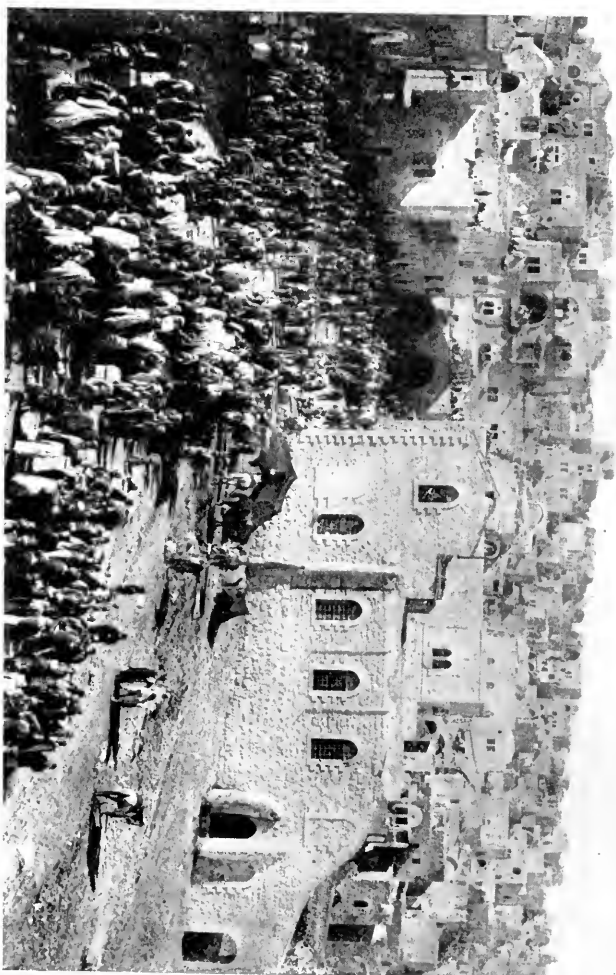
"I hope I *do* look like my father!" said Harold, proudly. "I wish I could speak like him, too. If I could, I'd make you stay in Bethlehem and win out."

"Why should you care what I do or—what becomes of me?" sighed the monk.

"I do care. I wish you'd stay and square yourself with those peasants and pilgrims that you've been cheating. I want you to stop all this fake business. Will you do it? Say, will you?"

Basil shook his head gloomily. "It's too late!"

"Why is it too late? You've got years to live. Do you think you'll ever be happy if you run away? Why, you'll remember all these things



Crowd of pilgrims in Bethlehem.

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that you 've done and—hate yourself. My father would tell you to stay here and help these people that need you, just as you 're helping me when I need you. Father was right—the seed *was* growing in your heart. He said you 'd give up your wicked life. Well, you will. You 've done it already. That 's why you kept your promise. You did n't dare break it. You said so yourself. And now you won't dare to run away from this thing that you ought to do. You won't dare be a quitter; *you won't dare!*"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MOUNTAINS OF JUDAH

IN spite of Harold's inspired outburst, Basil insisted that the young travelers put off their departure for Mar Saba at least two weeks. It was on this condition only that the monk would give them his promised help, and the boys soon realized that without this they would be sorely embarrassed. A journey into the Dead Sea valley was in itself a hazardous undertaking, but for two inexperienced lads to attempt the rescue of a prisoner from a fortress—it amounted to that—without knowing exactly what they were doing and how they proposed to accomplish it, this was a piece of hopeless folly. Furthermore, there was the problem of Telecjan.

“Poor old Ashrag!—down in the coal-bin. What are we going to do with him?” wondered Jack.

“I've been thinking about that,” said Sandy. “It's quite a sticker. We can't leave him down

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in those quarries to starve, and we can't let him out, and we can't take him with us."

For two days, the boys (back now in their Jerusalem quarters), worried over this problem; and twice Deeny, whose wounds had healed rapidly, made his way through the labyrinth of black caverns, taking food and water to the Syrian. Then, on the third day, the difficulty was suddenly relieved through no less a person than Basil himself, who came to Harold in joyful excitement, having in some way learned of Telecjan's confinement in the quarries.

"But—this makes a great difference to me!" the monk exclaimed. "This man is my enemy. He was employed to follow you just as I was employed to watch your father."

"By the same person?" asked Evans.

"Yes, and—don't you see? He knows what I have done. He has me in his power—that is to say, he *had* me in his power, but now—"

Harold shook his head disapprovingly. "See here, if you think you're going to work off any old grudge you've got against Telecjan just because he's down there helpless—"

"No, no! I don't mean that. I only ask to make terms with him. He wants his liberty. He

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will leave the country. That is the best thing for all of us."

"Leave the country," reflected Sandy. "If you can make Telecjian leave the country—"

"Make him?" Basil smiled mysteriously. "My young friend, he will board the first ship that sails and get away so fast that—wait and see."

And, sure enough, three days later, the coin collector, with furtive glances over his shoulder and an anxious look in his eyes (so the U. S. consular agent noticed) steamed away from the orange groves of Jaffa, from the clustered memories of Jonah, Andromeda, and Hardegg. As Jack expressed it, it seemed a safe guess that he would collect no more coins in Palestine.

"I don't know exactly how Brother Basil worked this," pondered Harold; "I guess there's more in it than we understand, Jack, but it looks to me as if we've rather *handed it* to Arshag Mesrop Telecjian."

"Well, just a little," grinned McGreggor.

While the boys saw the wisdom and the necessity of trusting Basil to make arrangements for the Mar Saba expedition, they fretted under the delay.

"If you could only hurry things up a little, Mr. Basil," urged Harold. "Deeny's all right now,

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and—you see it's ten days that we've been held up here. What's the matter with our starting?"

The monk shrugged his heavy shoulders. "Start if you will, but what then? Suppose you get to Mar Saba? What can you do there? I tell you the place is a fortress. It would take an army to capture it."

"But there must be *some* way," insisted Sandy. "Now if money will do any good."

Basil shook his head. "If it was only a question of money, I would give a thousand liras myself to get your father safely out of that place."

Harold's heart sank; he knew that a thousand Turkish liras was over four thousand dollars.

"Then you mean there's no use in our going to Mar Saba?" he asked.

"I don't say that."

"Tell you what we'll do," burst out McGregor; "we'll go straight to the United States consul in Jerusalem, and tell him this whole story. We'll see whether American citizens have any rights or not in this crazy land!"

Basil held up his hand in warning.

"No, you will *not* do that."

"Why not?"

"Because you would destroy Dr. Evans instead of saving him."

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The man's eyes darkened formidably.

"I'm afraid he's right, Jack," whispered Evans. "You know what my mother wrote."

"Do you mean to say," put in McGregor, unconvinced, "that the *person* back of all this is big enough to get away with the United States?"

Basil nodded grimly. "Before the United States could do anything to help Dr. Evans, it would be too late."

"But you've been encouraging us all these days," protested Harold. "You said we might succeed. You said you would help us?"

"So I will, but you must be patient."

Then the monk informed them that, three days before, he had sent his trusted servant, Gabriel, down into the Dead Sea valley to find a Bedouin named Khalil, the leader of a wandering tribe, and give him certain instructions looking to the rescue of Dr. Wicklow Evans.

"This man Khalil," explained Basil, "is received at Mar Saba as my representative; he sees the prisoner whenever he wishes. I shall have more to tell you as soon as Gabriel returns."

With this the boys had to be content, and for three days they chafed through the hours, taking more pictures, watching the crowds of pilgrims and peasants that swarmed through the Holy

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City, and getting a bit of excitement in the evenings as they watched the activities of Nehemiah, a scorpion-killer, who, with lantern on his turbaned head and bag under his arm, passed gravely through the narrow streets, impaling on his quick rapier the dangerous black pests as they scurried over the walls.

“Nice country,” remarked Jack. “Deadly flies in Jericho, and scorpions in Jerusalem.”

On the fourth day, very early in the morning, Gabriel arrived and brought good news from the Bedouin, it appeared, for Basil immediately sent for Harold and unfolded his plan to accomplish by a ruse what would be impossible by violence. McGreggor was not present at this interview, and was somewhat chagrined when Harold reported that the details were to be kept secret for twenty-four hours.

“You must n’t be offended, Jack. It is n’t any reflection on you. Basil thinks we might talk about the thing and—somebody might overhear us. See?”

“That’s all right,” said Jack, a little stand-offish; but he soon forgot his wounded dignity when he learned that they were to start for the Jordan valley in a few hours, and threw himself zealously into preparations for the trip.

THE MOUNTAINS OF JUDAH



The scorpion-killer at work.

“How long will we be gone?” he asked, as they packed their saddle-bags.

Evans hesitated, and McGregor saw that he was dying to tell him something.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

“Go on,” he teased. “A week? A month? Can’t you give a fellow some idea?”

Harold leaned close to his friend and whispered: “It may be all over by this time to-morrow night.”

“You mean—we may have your father with us—to-morrow night?”

Evans’s face brightened into a radiant smile. “Yes, old boy, that ’s what I mean. Now don’t ask any more questions, *please don’t.*”

It was two o’clock that afternoon when the young horsemen shook hands with Basil and the little cavalcade clattered down David Street with a great jangling of bells from a pack-mule that carried extra clothing and the moving-picture apparatus.

As they passed Gethsemane, outside the gates, they caught sight of Father Nicodemus standing under a venerable olive tree with a great Angora cat (it was Methuselah) on his shoulder. The monk was waving them god-speed with his wide-brimmed hat.

So they proceeded, Gabriel riding first, then the boys, then Deeny, leading an extra saddle-horse, and last, the muleteer and, presently, they came upon a line of beggars the saddest in the world, blind, crippled, and lepers, who straight-



Street in Jerusalem.

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way began to beat their tin pails and flaunt their misery.

“*Harwadja! Harwadja!*” (“Master! Master!”) they cried, in long-drawn, wailing chorus.

“Ugh!” shivered Jack. “Let ’s give ’em a few coppers and get along.”

Harold nodded.

“*B-r-r-h-h,*” he said to his horse, with a kick backward against the hind leg; and immediately the gait quickened.

“Is that the way you do it? ‘B-r-r-h-h,’” imitated McGregor, and his horse started forward on a canter. “Whoa, there! Not so fast! How do you tell ’em to whoa, Sandy, in Turkish?”

“*Heesh, heesh!*” called Evans, and the horses slowed down again.

Presently, they came to a hilltop (pointed out to tourists as the hill where Judas hanged himself), and looked down upon a stretch of ancient graveyards over which great vultures were soaring.

“Talk about flying-machines!” exclaimed Jack. “See how those *enormous* birds sail along without moving a feather. Why, they’re as tame as chickens.”

“That ’s because no one ever shoots ’em,” said Harold. “The Turks have a superstition that

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the souls of bad Moslems go into vultures and, if the vulture lives a hundred years, then the Moslem gets another chance at paradise, but, if the vulture dies, then the Moslem is lost forever."

"Who told you that, Sandy?"

"My father. You'll like him, Jack. He knows so much. I remember an inscription he showed me once in a Turkish graveyard at Adana. It said, '*Oh, traveler, I ask of thee a prayer. It is I who need one to-day, it is thou who will need one to-morrow.*' Pretty idea, is n't it?"

"Mighty pretty," agreed Jack thoughtfully and then for a long distance they rode on in silence through a dead and dreary solitude. No trees, no fields of grain, no vineyards, no vegetation of any sort. Only rolling rock-hills and rolling rock-valleys as far as the eye could see—bare rocks and sand, blotched with harsh colors, like slag out of a furnace. They were passing through the mountains of Judah.

On before them, through this desolation, ran the road's white trail, making queer long loops and corkscrew turnings—a child could not trace a crazier line with chalk on yellow paper. And along this road came other wayfarers, dust-covered pilgrims, or brisk donkey trains, or now and



Along this road came other wayfarers.

THE MOUNTAINS OF JUDAH

then a stately camel, one of the desert runners, with a white-shrouded Bedouin rider, his bare,



A stately camel with a Bedouin rider.

brown legs dangling over a gaily tasseled saddle blanket.

Three hours of journeying through this wilderness brought the boys to a point of high ground that stood like a watch-tower above the surround-

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

ing hills. Far behind them, clearly outlined against the setting sun, rose the Mount of Olives with its obelisk tower. And, as they turned to the east, where the long shadows extended, they saw that the hills fell away sharply before them, flattening down into rolling mounds with a level of dazzling white beyond, the white of snow or a glacier, and through this ran a dark blue line like a river—it *was* a river, it was the Jordan rushing on through its last chalk beds to the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea! Not yet visible, but hidden away there at the right, down in the gulf between these yellow mountains and the blue ones in the distance, deep down in the gulf between the mountains of Judah and the mountains of Moab.

Harold and Jack sat motionless on their horses, drinking in the strange, wild beauty of the scene. From the low-hanging sun came a light softened by the mists of evening. A pinkish haze seemed to settle over the hills, and in broad bands the colors of the rainbow, red, and orange, and purple, spread above them.

Jack thought of various things he would like to say, but they seemed "like things out of a book," and he felt somehow ashamed to say them. So he finally blurted out:

"Some picture, old boy!"

CHAPTER XIX

BEDOUIN TENTS

HALF an hour's ride down the mountains—the way was so steep that the boys were over their horses' necks about half the time—brought the young rescuers into a region of increasing vegetation, and Gabriel pointed out various shrubs and trees growing along the beds of dry watercourses. Here were wild olives and acacias, this was the mustard-tree, this the famous balm of Gilead, and that thorny bush bore the *Spinæ Christi*, strong, sharp thorns that would tear like a knife point. Growing among these thorns was a queer, yellow fruit about the size of a cherry, and withered like an old crab-apple. The guide gathered a handful of these, and the boys found in them, to their surprise, a fragrance and delicate flavor like a strawberry.

Harold suggested that if things grew like this near a dry watercourse, the whole plain could probably be made fertile by irrigation from the Jordan and changed into a real tropical garden.

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Gabriel admitted that it could be done, the Romans had done it centuries before, but what was the use, he said. If the Jericho people began irrigating the Jordan valley and raising fruits and grain it would simply mean that the Bedouins would come and steal everything besides killing the owners. There was no sense in working for the Bedouins. It was better to be poor. Which was a new point of view to the boys and gave them an idea of conditions prevailing in this benighted region.

Presently Jack asked about this man, Khalil, that they were going to meet.

"He 's a Bedouin, is n't he?"

"Khalil? Yes, he 's a Bedouin; he 's the chief of a tribe," answered Harold.

"A robber tribe?"

"Well—yes, but they will treat us kindly. They will probably kill a sheep in our honor."

"Kill a sheep? And—we will eat the sheep—with the robbers?" Jack tingled with excitement.

Gabriel smiled, and smacked his lips eloquently.

"That is why they kill it, sair. There is nothing better than—what you call it—mutton?"

"That 's right—mutton," nodded Harold.

"There is nothing in the world more delectious

BEDOUIN TENTS

than mutton as they serve it in the black tents of the Bedouins. You will see."

"This is the best news I've heard in some time," beamed McGregor. "Me for the robbers and the *delicious* mutton. Eh, Sandy?"

Suddenly the shadows deepened as the sun sank behind the hills. The purple haze and the rainbow tints were gone. The mountains of Moab across the plain looked dark and cruel, especially the rugged mass of Mount Nebo, where Moses lies.

"What's that?" Harold started, as a deep, musical whistle sounded from a thicket before them—"Hoo hoooooo hoooooo," and then again, "Hoo hoooooo hoooooo."

"A turtle, sair," answered the guide, meaning a turtle-dove, and the boys knew how "the voice of the turtle" sounds in the land.

Jack shifted on his saddle and glanced about him uneasily.

"Say, are there—are there any animals about here?"

"Yes, sair. There are jackals on the plain, and leopards in the mountains and wild boar along the river. Not many, but some. And there are snakes, too, bad snakes. They bite the natives mostly; bite their bare feet. See, like those

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

women—they come from Jericho.” Gabriel pointed to a group of veiled figures moving along silently with baskets on their heads. As one of these women threw back her veil, she showed a coarse face with queer blue marks tattooed around the mouth.

“Where are they going with those baskets?” asked Harold.

Gabriel spoke to the muleteer in Arabic.

“This man says they are going to the Dead Sea, sair, to steal salt.”

“To steal salt?”

“Yes, sair. The government takes all the salt, like all the tobacco, but the peasants come and scrape it off the ground and carry it away. Sometimes the soldiers fight them.”

“Is there salt on the ground?” marveled McGregor.

“Yes, sair, much salt. You will see. Ah! behold Khalil!”

With a dramatic gesture, Gabriel extended his arm toward the motionless figure of a horseman that suddenly came into view at a turn of the road. The horse was pure white, the rider’s head was swathed in white, and over his shoulders hung a black mantle. It was the Bedouin chief, waiting.

BEDOUIN TENTS

Khalil saluted with dignity as the riders drew up, and immediately there ensued a low-voiced colloquy, of which Jack understood absolutely



It was the Bedouin chief, waiting.

nothing. It was plain, however, that Harold and the Bedouins were coming to some agreement, and, presently, Harold drew forth his purse and gave Khalil a handful of liras. Whereupon the Arab, after pointing over the

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

hills, saluted again most respectfully, and galloped off, leading the extra saddle-horse.

"Well," said Jack, when this mysterious transaction was accomplished, "I hope you know what you're doing, Sandy. I'm sure I don't."

Harold thought a moment, then, laying his hand affectionately on McGregor's shoulder, he said: "Don't be sore, Jack. I've kept my mouth shut because Basil told me to, but it can't make any difference now. Listen! You've just seen this Bedouin start off with the extra saddle-horse. You can guess where he's going?"

"Mar Saba?"

"Right. It's only an hour from here. He'll be back in a few hours, and—" Evans choked a little. "I hope he won't come back alone, Jack."

McGreggor reached forward impulsively and gripped his friend's hand. "I do hope that he brings your father, Sandy."

"Thanks, old boy. It looks like an easy thing," continued Harold, trying to hide his feelings. "Those Mar Saba people trust Khalil, so they'll let him see my father, and—he has eighty yards of silk rope wound around his waist. It's the strongest that's made but not bulky, and—that money was Basil's, he paid it—thirty liras.

BEDOUIN TENTS

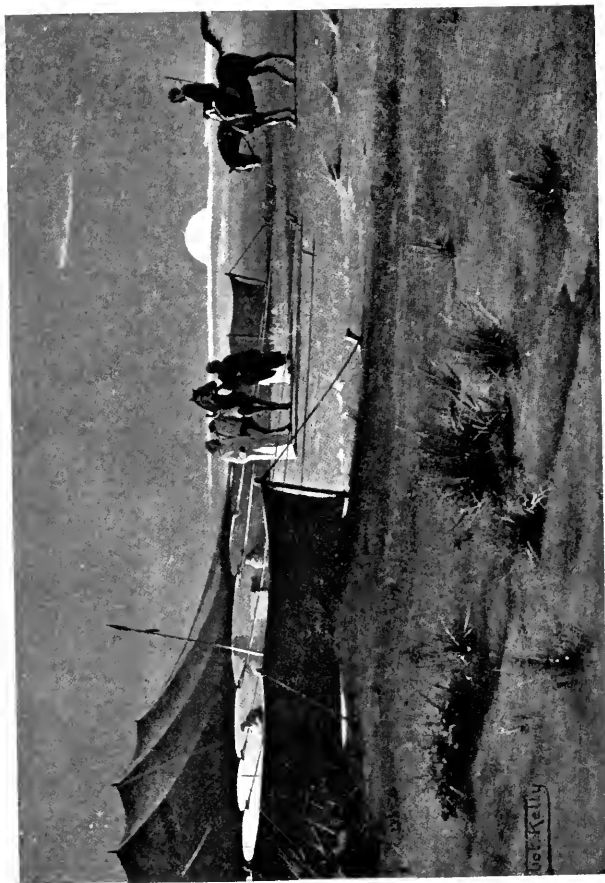
Khalil is to have thirty more if he brings Father here safely."

"Is the idea to have your father slide down that rope—eighty yards?" whispered Jack.

"That 's it. Careful now!" Harold pointed to several Bedouins who came galloping up with a grand flourish, but with every mark of respect. "These are Khalil's men. They are going to entertain us until he comes back."

It is certain that the boys were well entertained on this occasion in the black Bedouin tents that spread over a neighboring hillside. Jack always treasured the memory of this night's experience, and of the banquet which was prepared for the young Americans. Indeed, it was a really wonderful meal, consisting of soup, roast sheep, a mound of vegetables, and a thick layer of rice cakes, all heaped together in a bowl about a yard in diameter, and served without spoons, forks, or knives.

After this savory but conglomerate repast had been devoured by the hand to mouth method, the satisfied company gathered, cross-legged, around a pleasant tent-fire, and enjoyed two hours of Oriental story-telling. And here Nasr-ed-Din proved himself a star performer, his contribu-



Evening in a Bedouin tent.

BEDOUIN TENTS

tions calling forth enthusiastic approval from the ring of bronzed faces.

One of the stories that Deeny told was about an ancestor of his own who bore the same name and whose fame as a kind of queer philosopher had spread far and wide. This other Nasr-ed-Din, it seems, climbed into his neighbor's garden one night to steal watermelons and he had just put twenty luscious melons into his bag when the neighbor caught him, though, to be sure, he made no attempt to escape.

"What are you doing here in my garden?" cried the angry owner.

With perfect dignity Nasr-ed-Din replied: "The fact is, my good sir, I was blown over the wall by a terrific gale."

"I see, but why did you pick these watermelons?"

"Why—er—as the wind blew me along I clutched at the vines to stop myself."

"Very good," said the neighbor, "but how did the melons get inside your bag?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Nasr-ed-Din, "that's a very good question. I was just wondering about that myself when you arrived."

The Bedouins applauded this story so heartily that Deeny was just preparing to relate another

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when there sounded outside a clatter of hoof beats coming rapidly up the hill.

Deeny listened attentively and lifted two fingers.

"Two horses!" exulted Harold, springing to his feet, his eyes shining, his whole body trembling with excitement, as he hurried toward the door of the tent.

By a common impulse the others followed, and, a moment later, they all were crowding out into the darkness, eager to learn the result of their leader's mysterious mission.

CHAPTER XX

MAR SABA AT NIGHT

HAROLD'S heart sank as he stepped out into the night, for a single glance showed him a white rider galloping up the hill with an empty-saddled horse behind him. Dr. Wicklow Evans was not there. The rescue plan had failed.

"What happened? What went wrong? Quick!" Harold demanded, as the Bedouin sprang to the earth.

With an impatient gesture, Khalil ordered his followers back inside the tent. Then he explained the unfortunate turn of affairs. It was very simple. In spite of their secrecy, some suspicion had reached Mar Saba that a plan was on foot to rescue Dr. Evans, and when the Arab appeared at the gates, he was not only refused his usual privilege of seeing the prisoner, but he was not even allowed to set foot inside the convent walls. In vain he had argued and pleaded. The head of the convent had given



"What happened? What went wrong?" demanded Harold.

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positive orders that Khalil was not to be received on any pretext whatever, and the Bedouin, angry and discomfited, had finally ridden away. It was fate. There was nothing more to say.

"There 's a good deal more to say," replied Harold, with flashing eyes.

"What are you going to do, Sandy?" asked Jack.

"Do?" cried Evans, and his face bore the look the St. Paul boys had seen in a famous foot-ball game, when, in spite of his slender figure, Sandy went through the Andover line for eighty yards and scored a touch-down. "Do? I 'm going to get my father out of Mar Saba."

Then, turning to Khalil, with the air of a young commander, he called for the horses.

The Bedouin stared in amazement. The horses? Were the gentlemen tired of his hospitality? No, but the gentlemen had urgent business to transact. They were leaving at once. But it was long after midnight. It was not safe for the gentlemen to be abroad at this hour. Safe or not, they were going, Harold replied, and, what was more, Khalil was going with them. No, said Khalil, he was not going with them; he was certainly *not* going with them.

Half an hour later, the little cavalcade set

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forth once more, turning their faces toward the rugged heights of Mar Saba. And on the foremost horse (such is the power of an unswerving purpose) rode the Bedouin. It was a foolish and useless effort, he grumbled, but, since the gentlemen insisted, he would do his best. It may be added that Khalil had received five extra liras for his trouble.

Soon after the start, Harold pushed forward and rode beside the Arab, and for several miles the two remained in earnest conversation, holding their horses to a quick walk. As the road grew steeper, they dismounted to adjust their saddles, and Evans showed Jack how to fasten his saddlegirth in front around the horse's chest, native fashion, so as to keep it from slipping back.

"Say, Sandy," ventured McGregor, as they started on again, "have you any idea what we're going to do when we get to Mar Saba? Honest, now, have you?"

Harold's face brightened as he answered his friend.

"As a matter of fact, Jack, I *had* no idea when we started except that we must do *something*, but—it's wonderful, old boy, the way things happen.

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I guess we're being steered better than we know."

"All right, and then what?" said McGregor, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"The point is, I've been talking to Khalil, asking him questions, and he's given me an idea. We've got to get that rope up to Father, and—I know how to do it."

"Fine!"

"That is, I think I do. Just give me a few minutes to work out my plan. We'll be there in half an hour."

"All right! Keep your thought machine working full time," said Jack. "I guess we'll need it."

The moon, swinging high in a cloudless heaven, had wrapped the rude mountain gorges in silver splendor. For another mile, the boys rode on in silence, and now all kept their horses in single file as the path grew steeper and narrower. Presently they entered a great cañon where every horseman needed his wits about him as they skirted giddy chasms black with shadows in their depths. Then, suddenly, there lifted before them a vague mass of tower and archway, and a moment later the fortress-monastery came into view,

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clinging to the face of the opposite precipice with the moon full on it.

“So that’s the little job we’re up against,” muttered Jack, as he looked across the gulf and rested his eyes on this rambling habitation, built like a swallow’s nest against a wall, with a great depth below and a great height above. In the moon’s transforming light it looked like a flattened-out castle with turrets and galleries and battlements.

And presently a strong voice sounded through the night and was joined by other voices that rose and fell in suppliant cry. No need to understand the words; it was a prayer for help and forgiveness; it was the monks chanting.

As the voices ceased, a bell struck ten with harsh, quick strokes, telling that it was ten o’clock by the Arabic reckoning of time, about half-past four, English time—and already the day was breaking. Yet the moon still held her own and threw enormous shadows of the horsemen across the gulf upon the convent walls.

Harold motioned the company to draw back. “We must n’t be seen!” he whispered.

And now, stretched on their backs, with a saddle blanket to ease the hardness of the rocks, the boys saw two things that they always remem-

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bered—a star rising up like a lifted torch, and a jackal. The jackal was walking along a ledge of rock, so plain against the dawn that they could see each foot lift. Then the morning star flashed suddenly over the bald mountain crest, like a light-house signal. And even as they looked, there was clear sky between the star and the mountain, one inch, two inches, then a foot. Most extraordinary! A star was racing up the sky, they could see it move!

By this time the convent was rousing itself for the day. More bells rang. Monks appeared on the terraces, and moved along the narrow balconies. Jack discovered one monk standing on a high tower and looking down into the cañon. Others mounted crooked stone stairways that led from terrace to terrace. Two came out with bread, and fed it to some yellow-breasted grackles, evidently pets, that fluttered in and plucked the crumbs from their hands. Harold rose and beckoned to Khalil, who nodded, and led the way down a precipitous path.

“Come on, Jack. I’ll show you what we’re going to do. We will send Gabriel to take the horses around by a long way, and—Careful with the horses! Careful there! We’ve got to get down to the bottom of this place.”

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Presently, at a lower level, they crossed a natural bridge, trellised over with grape-vines, and then it was seen that the Mar Saba convent did not face the main cañon, but hung over a tributary gulf, and the boys now found themselves looking across at a second rock wall rising full five hundred feet in sheer perpendicular above a mountain torrent that tumbled along in the depth beneath them. The face of this second wall was marked with various irregular openings, rising in tiers one above the other, some of them connected by ladders and wooden galleries.

Khalil paused impressively, and pointed to one of these openings, saying something in Arabic, while Harold listened eagerly.

“Jack,” said the boy, with suppressed excitement. “You see those openings way up there in the precipice? He says they are caves cut in the rock—there are dozens of ’em, and—you see that large one, the second on the right—that ’s where my father is.”

Still the descent continued with increasing perils. The boys passed along narrow ledges where a single false step would have plunged them into the gulf. Once McGreggor shut his eyes as a treacherous stone slipped from under

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him, but Deeny sprang forward just in time and caught his arm.

Thus, finally, without other harm than some bruises, and a general weariness, they reached the torrent's bed.

"Whe-ew!" panted Jack. "I'm done up!" He threw himself down by a line of willows that fringed the stream, and, kicking his feet among the red flowers of a pomegranate bush, he closed his eyes wearily. "I'll never get back up that mountain!" he sighed.

Meantime, young Evans and the Bedouin were busying themselves with mysterious preparations. Khalil quickly unwound the knotted silken rope that had been concealed around his waist, then, with Harold's help, he tested every length of it over a strong willow branch. At each end of the rope he made a noose.

McGreggor watched all this in sleepy astonishment. What were they trying to do? Dr. Evans' cave was two hundred feet straight up the face of that precipice across the brook.

"Is one of those nooses to go under your father's arms when he slides down the rope?"

"Yes."

"And the other noose is to hitch around something up there in the cave and hold the rope?"

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“That ’s it.”

Jack lay back and yawned as if he was trying to swallow the mountain.

“It ’s a good-enough scheme, Sandy, but—how the *mischief* are you going to get that rope up to your father?”

CHAPTER XXI

THE TIN BUCKET

“**Y**OU go to sleep,” said Sandy. “I guess you’re tired.”

Jack sat up stiffly and looked at his friend with reproachful eyes.

“Tired?” he snorted. “Why should n’t I be tired? What do you think I am? A fireless cooker? Eight hours on a jouncey horse, no sleep all night, and a precipice that breaks your heart for breakfast. Tired? Well, say!” He lay back and closed his eyes as if words utterly failed to express his feelings.

For about twenty minutes after this, nothing happened. Deeny sat cross-legged on the bank and crooned a doleful lullaby as he, too, tested the rope that was to save his master. Khalii lighted a cigarette and blew philosophical rings toward the rising sun. Harold leaned against a willow and never took his eyes from that lofty cave opening, the second on the right, where his father was. His father!

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Presently a quick whispering brought McGregor back to consciousness, and, looking up drowsily, he saw a tin bucket descending out of the heavens, not falling, but coming down deliberately and on a slant, as if it understood its mission. Nearer and nearer to the torrent came this well trained bucket, then, choosing a deep place with excellent judgment, it dipped itself therein, after which, full to the brim, it began to ascend again with long swingings, going closer and closer to the precipice across the stream, but never quite striking it.

As Jack followed the movements of this bucket in its slanting upward course, he discovered that it was not moving miraculously, but was sliding on a trolley-wire which stretched down to the mountain stream from a flimsy balcony in front of one of the caves. And on this balcony, far up the wall, he made out a tiny figure of a man turning a wheel that drew in or let out a pulley cord which operated the bucket on its wire. A moment later, this figure was seen to receive and empty the bucket, then start it back on its downward journey.

“Jack!” called Evans, excitedly. “Help Khalil with the rope while I wave. That’s Father!”

There was no time for more words nor for any

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show of feeling. The critical moment had come. They must act.

As the bucket reached the stream again, Khalil waded in and seized it, and, with a piece of twine, made fast the rope. Harold, meantime, was waving his hands and fluttering a handkerchief.

"He's bound to look down when he feels the weight of the rope!" said the boy. "Then he'll see me waving."

"He won't know who it is," objected Jack. "It's too far to see."

"He will know," declared Harold confidently. "Ah, I told you! Look! He's waving back. Now then! All ready! Let her go!"

As the pulley line tightened and began to lift, Khalil fed out the rope which was presently dangling down from the bucket like a long snake.

In breathless suspense they watched the rope rise higher and higher. The figure on the balcony stood ready and was actually leaning out to grasp the precious means of escape, when suddenly another figure, in a blue garment, darted forward on a balcony about twenty feet beneath.

"Hurry! Hurry!" shouted Harold, realizing the danger.

But it was too late. The blue-clad figure reached forth an implement that looked like a

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rake or a hoe, and, drawing in the bucket as it passed, seized it, despite frantic efforts of the figure above.

“Oh!” cried Harold, in dismay. “He ’s going to cut the rope!”

At the same moment, something flashed in the sunlight on the lower balcony, and, a moment later, the whole length of silken cord came wriggling down through the air and fell among the jagged rocks on the opposite bank.

“It ’s hard luck, old boy!” said McGreggor, comfortingly, as he saw his friend’s distress. “Anyhow, we know your father’s up there; that ’s something. There must be *some* way of saving him. We ’ll think of something, and—that ’s good, we ’ve got the rope, anyway.” He said this as Khalil came wading back with the rescued line.

Just then a faint cry sounded from above, and they caught the words: “Harold! My son! Wait!”

Harold waved back that he understood, and immediately Dr. Evans disappeared inside the cave. Then for ten minutes—it seemed much longer—the boys sat anxiously on the bank, wondering what would happen next.

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"Your father seems to be all right," sympathized Jack; "that 's a great thing."

"Yes," agreed Evans, "but—oh, well! You 're a mighty good friend, Jack, that 's sure."

At this moment, the missionary appeared again, and was seen to hold out some white object and move it back and forth as if to attract attention. Harold signaled back that he was looking, whereupon the father, with a quick movement, cast the white object far out over the cañon. He had judged his distance so nicely that it just cleared the torrent and descended into a cluster of fig-trees not a hundred yards from where the boys were standing.

Harold hurried after the prize, and presently returned, unknitting a handkerchief in which was tied a stone and a sheet of paper bearing hastily penciled words.

"Say, Sandy, it strikes me you get letters from your people in queer ways," grinned McGregor. "This is the second one."

"I hope it gives us as good a line on what to do as the one we got from Mother," answered Evans. "It is n't very long, and—" As he looked over the sheet, the boy's face darkened, and he shook his head. "I don't see how we can do this."

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“Do what? Read it, Sandy. Read it,” urged Jack.

Then Harold read the letter:

My Dear Son:

My prayers have been answered and you have been brought to me. The idea of the rope might have succeeded, but it is too late now. I shall be more closely guarded in the future, and you must not try again to rescue me. Above all, you must not go to the authorities. That would do me great harm; it might destroy our chances of ever meeting again. You must go to Damascus and seek out Abdul Pasha, leader of the young Turk party. Tell him the whole truth. Show him the ring which I inclose—it is one he gave to me. He will do the rest. God bless you, my boy. A heart full of love to you and your mother, who is somewhere near, I know.

Your father,

WICKLOW EVANS.

P.S. They are kind to me here, and will be glad to have orders to release me; but the orders must come from very high up. *See Abdul Pasha and show him the ring.*

“But—I don’t see any ring!” said Harold, in perplexity. “There is n’t any ring.”

“Wait! You may have dropped it. What’s this?” Jack darted down the bank and picked up a piece of paper twisted together like a child’s

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torpedo. "Here it is! Here it is!" he exulted, and handed to his friend a gold ring with a large brown seal on which various strange characters were cut.

Harold frowned as he took the ring. "I'm not going to Damascus. I'm not going to leave my father here—not if I can help it."

"But if you can't help it, then you'll have to," said Jack, philosophically, "just as we had to leave your mother there at the pyramid. Eh, Sandy?"

A little later, after waiting vainly for Dr. Evans to appear again on his balcony, the boys started down the cañon, and, after proceeding about half a mile, they joined Gabriel, who was waiting with the horses at the place agreed upon. Deeny was terribly disappointed at the utter failure of their efforts.

"*Zaṭalli Effendim! Zaṭalli Effendim!*" ("My poor master!") he kept saying and would not be comforted.

It was a sad and silent company that started back for the Bedouin encampment. The more Harold pondered his father's admonitions, the more he realized that they were sound and must be followed. It was evident that some very powerful person was back of this conspiracy, and

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their only chance of coping with him was to have power on their side also. Perhaps it was better that their plan with the rope had failed. They might have been pursued and captured. In these lawless solitudes anything could happen.

And yet it was hard for Harold to go away and leave his father. Damascus was a long way off, and who could say what this Abdul Pasha would do! It was putting a lot of trust in a ring. Besides, Abdul Pasha might be away, he might be ill, he might be afraid to help them.

As these somber thoughts passed through Evans' mind, they came to a picturesque rock-bridge across the gorge. A solitary rider on a camel was just before them; Harold could hear him grunting to the beast, "*Khu, khu,*" to quicken his pace. And, again, he followed the circles of some floating vultures as they circled over the gulf with wings extended, motionless. Then, like a flash, the inspiration came.

"Jack!" he cried excitedly. "I've got it! I've got it!"

"Easy now, old boy!" cautioned McGreggor. "If you're thinking of hitching the rope to the leg of a vulture and making him carry it up—"

"I'm not!" said Evans. "Don't be silly. But

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I've got an idea from the vultures—it was *your* idea.”

“My idea?”

“Remember that deep valley near Jerusalem? You said it would be a great place to study flying-machines. Well, there's a flying-machine we could make. It's a very simple kind, but it would lift that rope, and, if the wind was right, we could steer it over the balcony where Father is!”

McGreggor listened incredulously. “I'll bet you four dollars and sixty-nine cents you can't make a flying-machine that will do that!”

“I said *we* could do it. You'll help me, won't you? We can make a big kite, can't we? A big box-kite? I remember reading about a kite that lifted a man twenty or thirty feet.”

The boys faced each other in silence as the idea took form in their minds. “By Jove!” exclaimed Jack, beginning to be impressed.

“Will you help me build it?”

“Sure I'll help you!” answered McGregor. Then, after a pause, he shook his head slowly. “But you can't steer a kite up to that cave, Sandy. You can't do it in a million years.”

CHAPTER XXII

RUNAWAY KITES

THE next week saw a remarkable change in the ordinary activities of the Bedouin camp. These rough men seemed suddenly to lose all interest in their plunder and marauding; they became absolutely absolved in the doings of two American boys who had taken to making kites. A kite, apparently, was something that had not been seen in the Jordan valley within the memory of the oldest robber.

The first kite was a failure, to Harold's deep chagrin, for he made it himself, the day after their return from Mar Saba. He wanted particularly to have it a success, so that Jack would look more favorably upon his rescue idea. But the kite behaved badly; it darted from side to side in a most discouraging way, and then, after diving madly, it smashed itself to pieces on the rocks.

Jack was coldly sympathetic. "What can you expect?" he said. "We have n't got the stuff to

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make kites with, we have n't got the right kind of paper, or the right kind of sticks, or—”

“We've got bamboo. It grows all around here,” interrupted Harold. “You can't beat bamboo for kite sticks.”

McGreggor shook his head. “I don't use bamboo in my kites.”

“Your kites? Do you know how to make kites?”

“Do I?” Jack's smile was distinctly patronizing. “I not only know how to make 'em, but *after* I've made 'em, they go up.”

“Huh!” retorted Evans. “The next one I make will go up, all right. I'll take more pains with the measurements. Say, what kind of sticks do you use in your kites?”

“Ash or hickory, if I can get 'em. Bamboo is too bulky, and you can't bend it right for the crosspiece.”

“Crosspiece? What do you want a crosspiece for?”

“What for? Why, the crosspiece is the whole thing. I'm not talking about a box-kite.” He glanced contemptuously at the wreck of Harold's effort. “I'm talking about a scientific kite, a tailless kite. They're the only kind, with the crosspiece bowed forward against the wind—

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you bend it about four per cent. of the length.”

“Say, you do know a lot about kites!” admitted Harold. “Just the same, I can make a string of box-kites that will carry that rope. Tell you what, you make one your way and I’ll make one mine, and we’ll see which flies the best. Will you do it, Jack?”

McGreggor was somewhat mollified by his friend’s increasing respect, but he still insisted that they lacked the proper materials.

“We can send to Jerusalem for anything we want,” urged Harold; “Gabriel is here to do what we tell him; those are Basil’s orders.”

Finally, Jack allowed himself to be persuaded, and three days later (after Gabriel had procured what was necessary), he sent up a tailless, diamond-shaped kite that rose to a height of half a mile, and floated proudly over the mountains of Judah.

“There!” said Jack. “That’s what I call flying a kite!”

The Bedouins watched every detail of this operation with the eagerness of children, and were impressed with superstitious awe when a huge, silver-tipped eagle swooped down out of the sky and circled around and around the kite, as if



A huge, silver-tipped eagle circled around the kite.

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challenging this strange newcomer to aërial combat.

The next day, McGreggor sent up a string of tailless kites, three of them hitched tandem to a strong, main line. This gave Harold a new idea.

“Say, Jack, what if we hitched all our kites to one line?”

“You mean box-kites and tailless kites?”

“Yes. Would the cord hold?”

McGreggor nodded. “It would hold, all right—it’s tested up to a hundred and fifty pounds—but—we’d have to have a reel—with a leather brake. You never could hold that line with your hands. I’ve got six four-footers and you’ve got—how many box-kites?”

“Three, but they’re big ones.”

“Nine kites on a single line. By Jove! I should say you could n’t hold ’em!”

Sandy Evans sat silent for several minutes, then he came to the great question of rescuing Dr. Evans.

“Jack, that line of kites would carry up the silk rope all right, would n’t it?”

“Sure. The silk rope does n’t weigh over ten pounds. Those nine kites would carry a hundred and twenty—easy.”

“Say, you did n’t believe much in my idea

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when I first sprung it, but—you know what this means to me. Maybe you think I ought to have done what Father said, and gone right on to Damascus without fooling around with these kites, but—” Harold’s voice broke here, although he tried to hide his feelings—“I could n’t do it, old boy; I just could n’t leave Father.”

Jack was generous now in his sympathy, and, to Harold’s surprise, took a new attitude in regard to the kite plan.

“I don’t know whether we can get away with it, Sandy; it’s a long shot, but—I begin to feel that you’re working under—higher orders, that’s a fact, and—maybe there’s some reason why it’s better we should n’t go to Damascus.”

This was the second time John McGregor had revealed an unsuspected spiritual side to his nature, and Sandy felt drawn to his friend more strongly than ever.

“It’s wonderful, old boy, that you know so much about kites,” he said simply. “I could never have done this thing alone.”

McGreggor laughed. “Wait till I get that silk rope up to your father before you hand me any more bouquets.”

The boys retired presently, but were awakened a few hours later by Khalil, who entered their

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tent with important news. One of his men, prowling about near Mar Saba, had passed a company of Turkish soldiers, and learned that they had been sent to remove an American from the convent. The American was evidently Dr. Evans.

Jack sat up in astonishment. "Turkish soldiers! Say, that shows there *is* a big man back of all this!"

"There 's only one thing to do, and we 've got to do it quick," declared Evans, with a funny, little sidewise jerk of the head. Then he took the Bedouin aside and talked to him earnestly in Arabic. And he gave him a handful of liras, whereupon Khalil saluted most respectfully, and hurried off.

"Anyhow, we 've got these Bedouins on our side," said Harold. "It 's partly the kites—they think we 're a couple of magicians—and it 's partly Basil's money, and—besides, they naturally hate Turkish soldiers."

"What are we going to do, Sandy?"

"We 're going to get that rope up to Father. We 've got two days. This is Thursday. Tomorrow is Friday and a Turkish holiday. So the soldiers won't take Father away until Saturday.

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Khalil is sure he can fix that—with the money I gave him.”

“Two days!” reflected Jack. “Say, it ’ll keep us hustling.”

“We ’ll hustle!” said Sandy, with grim decision.

The boys were up soon after daybreak, and worked faithfully through the morning, McGregor constructing a reel to resist the heavy pull of the kite-cord, while Harold experimented with the kites themselves.

And now there came a strange happening that nearly upset all their plans of rescue. A stiff wind was blowing from the west, and when Harold had hitched five kites to the main line, he found the pull so strong (sixty or seventy pounds, McGregor estimated) that he felt it would not be safe to add any more kites until the reel was ready. He was just easing the strain by hitching the cord around a venerable fig-tree, when there came a cry of surprise from the group of Bedouins, and, looking up, Harold discovered that one of the kites had changed its color. It was the leader, a tailless kite covered with cherry-red paper, but now, as it swung impressively against the clear blue sky, Harold saw

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that its red surface was surrounded by a border of bright green.

It did not occur to him to explain this, as he might have done by applying what he had learned about complementary colors in his textbook on physics, and he stared in astonishment. He was wearing his sun glasses, as usual, and, thinking they might be blurred, he tucked the kite-stick under his arm and tried to clean them, but, at this moment, there came a fierce, treacherous gust, and, before Harold realized the danger, the whole string of kites, on which everything depended, was sailing away down the valley at the speed of an express train, and headed straight for the Dead Sea.

“Oh, you idiot!” shouted Jack, as he rushed out of the tent and witnessed the disaster. “Have n’t you got any sense? Did n’t I tell you we could n’t fly those kites without a reel?” Then he stopped short in his outburst at the sight of Harold’s grief-stricken face.

“You ’re right, Jack,” said Evans, in dull despair. “I—I am an idiot.”

The boys stood helpless, with eyes fixed on the runaway kites as they swept on, dropping lower and growing smaller, until finally they almost vanished in the east.

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“I ’m afraid that ends our program, old boy,” said McGreggor kindly. “It ’s hard luck.”

“Wait!” cried Harold, who had been shading his eyes and staring toward the horizon. “I may be crazy, but—Jack! It seems to me I see those kites still. It ’s true! The string has caught on something and—quick! the horses!” he called in great excitement.

“By George! I believe you ’re right!” exclaimed Jack. “I see ’em, too.”

Five minutes later, in spite of the blistering heat that sizzled over the Jordan valley during these midday hours, the boys, accompanied by Deeny and Gabriel and one of the Bedouins, set out on a gallop in the direction of the Dead Sea. And half an hour later, they reached a pile of rocks, where it was found that the stick at the end of the kite-cord, as it whirled along, had managed somehow to entangle itself in a mound of black basalt boulders heaped up here ages before, for no other purpose, perhaps, than to bring to rest these five wayward kites.

It was the work of only a few moments to secure the runaways, whereupon the boys threw themselves on the ground and rested after their exertions.

The heat now increased until it became almost

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unbearable, and McGregor pointed longingly to the line of blue water that showed across the barren plain.

“That ’s the Dead Sea,” said Evans.

“It may be dead, but it ’s wet, and—I ’d give anything I ’ve got for a swim in it.”

“A swim in the Dead Sea,” reflected Harold. Then he spoke to the Bedouin, who said that, with the horses, it would take them hardly more than ten minutes to reach this strange body of water.

“We ’ve got heaps of time,” urged Jack. “We can’t start back anyway until it ’s cooler, and we ’ve earned a little sport. We ’ll take the kites with us. Look at ’em! They ’re flying fine. It ’s easy enough to tow ’em along behind.”

So, with light hearts, the young sportsmen turned their horses into that strange arid region that lies to the north of the Dead Sea. What fantastic shapes of the salted sand are here! Great, white fortresses, one would say, that dot the gleaming plain like chessmen on a board, weird creations of spongy white mud, and, beyond these, the sinister lake beneath whose chastening flood the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are believed by some to rest.

For half an hour the boys swam in the Dead

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Sea, or, rather, lay on it and floated. Any one can float in the Dead Sea, by reason of its extraordinary buoyancy. You stretch yourself out as you please, legs up, legs down, on your back, on your side, and, whatever you do, you lie there, and float. It is impossible to sink in the Dead Sea.

This buoyancy of the water suggested to the boys a new and amusing sport with the kites. The wind was blowing straight across a rounded cove where they were bathing, and they discovered that they could lie on the water, first one at a time and then both together, and let the kites tow them across this cove. Then they would run back around the bank, leading the kite-string, and do it over again.

“Talk about your motor-boats,” laughed McGregor. “Why, these kites would tow us clear across the Dead Sea, if the wind held right.”

If the wind held right! At these words the boys suddenly became serious.

“I say, Sandy,” said Jack, “do you remember how that Mar Saba cave faces?”

“It faces east,” answered Evans. “Don’t you remember how the sun was full on it that morning?”

“That’s so. Then—if this wind keeps blow-

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ing from the west, it won't do. We've got to have a wind from the east to get that rope up to your father."

"Yes," nodded Harold. "We've got to have a wind from the east. We're going to have a wind from the east."

"By to-morrow night? That's our last chance."

"I know. The wind will change by to-morrow night."

"But—suppose it doesn't change?"

"It will change," insisted Harold, and his face shone with such an inspired light that McGregor received his words as a prophecy.

"Yes," he said simply. "I guess the wind will change."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ESCAPE

THE wind did change. After blowing steadily from the west for twenty-four hours, it swung around to the north at about sundown of the next day, and an hour later, it veered suddenly to the east and came strongly with a storm of rain.

“If we only had paraffined paper,” lamented Jack, “we could send these kites up in the wet! They ’ll fly in anything short of a hurricane, but if we send ’em up now, the paper will soak off the sticks.”

“We ’ve got to send ’em up, anyway,” decided Harold. “It will take some time for the paper to soak off.” Then he glanced at his Waterbury. “Nine o’clock. We need n’t start until ten. Maybe it will stop raining.”

For half an hour, they worked like beavers on the kite-cord, waxing it carefully; then they waxed the surface of the kites as well as they

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could, but they knew this precaution would not avail against a hard rain.

At a quarter to ten, the horses and men were ready, and a few minutes later, a resolute little company, with a full escort of Bedouins, set out once more for Mar Saba. When they reached the top of the mountain facing the convent, the rain had ceased and the wind was blowing a half-gale from the east.

"It beats all how things are coming our way," marveled McGreggor.

Evans looked at him earnestly. "You can *make* things come your way, Jack, if you believe in 'em hard enough. Now let's hustle!"

They sent the kites up without difficulty from the side of the cañon opposite the cave, and saw them, one by one disappear into the gray night; and they felt the pull of the kite-cord increase until, even with the reel strapped securely to his waist, it took all of McGreggor's strength to control the nine valiant fliers.

"Better put that reel on Deeny," advised Harold. "He's got the weight and the strength, and when these hard gusts come—"

"That's all right," panted Jack. "Tell Deeny to stand close to me and grab the line if I need

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him. Better hitch your rope on, Sandy. Say, but these kites do pull!"

With a few deft turns Harold made fast the silken rope, and then stood waiting for the next move. McGreggor was the general here, and he evidently felt the weight of his responsibility.

"Now what?" asked Sandy, holding ready the coiled-up eighty yards that was to save his father. "Shall we feed her out?"

Jack shook his head and silently studied the up-slanting kite-line and the sky above it, across which were hurrying masses of thinning clouds.

"Wait! We'll see better in a minute. It's clearing, Sandy. There's a moon in there somewhere behind those clouds."

Even as he spoke, a small cloud-area brightened with a diffused radiance that showed where the Lady of the Night was hiding herself. And presently the opposite precipice came into clearer view, and the cave of Wicklow Evans, the top-most one with the large opening, the second on the right. In front of this cave was the ten-foot balcony, and down from this, hugging the precipice, ran a zigzag of steep ladders that reached to the second gallery, some thirty feet below, upon which two other caves opened. In each of

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these lower caves, a dim light was burning, whereas Dr. Evans' cave was dark.

McGreggor pointed to these lower lights. "They're guarding the ladders from your father's cave. They think that's the only way he can escape—by the ladders. Sandy, are you sure your father is ready? Don't you think we'd better call to him?"

"No, no," cautioned Harold. "That would give the thing away. Father's ready, all right. Khalil got word to him. He'll be watching for the rope."

For some minutes, Jack manœvered skilfully with the kite-cord, reeling it in or out, and walking back and forth along the edge of the cañon, like a sportsman playing some huge fish.

"I want to get the kites into the best position I can," he explained. "Now then! Feed out your rope. Not too fast! That's right! See how they lift it! Fine!"

As he spoke, Jack reeled out the kite-cord steadily. The ascending line carried the silk rope with it, and when the whole eighty yards were suspended, the boys were delighted to see that the lower end of this pendant rope hung well below Dr. Evans's balcony.

"He's only got to reach out and grab it when

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we steer it across to him," said Jack, and again he manœvered with the kite-line. "There! That's aimed about right."

Now he let the reel run out freely, and Harold thrilled as each turn of the handle swung the dangling rope nearer to the cave.

As he watched anxiously, young Evans reflected that these two grim precipices, facing each other across the cañon, were like two thirty-story buildings on a wide city street. He and Jack, from the roof of one building, were trying to get a rope across to a man in a window on the fifteenth story of the opposite building. Only this man, Wicklow Evans, had no fire-escapes, or marble stairs, or electric elevators to help him. He had fifteen stories of sheer rock above him, and fifteen stories of sheer rock beneath him.

Suddenly, the moon, emerging from behind her thin covering, silvered the mountains with peaceful splendor, and, at this moment, there sounded from the convent, hidden around the angle of the precipice, a muffled chanting. Harold closed his eyes in a swift, silent prayer that they might be guided and blessed this night in the effort they were making.

Meantime McGregor had discovered a dark

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figure moving along the balcony opposite, a figure that seemed to be leaning forward.

"Sandy, it's your father!" he whispered. "Look! He's reaching for it! He's got it! He's got the rope!"

Harold opened his eyes and saw that the great moment had come. The man on the fifteenth story of the sky-scraper was about to descend. There was nothing the boys could do now except to watch breathlessly.

"I don't like this moonlight," muttered Evans. "I wish he would hurry."

"He is hurrying. See? He's hauling down the silk rope and the kite-line with it. There! He's got it. He's untying it. Catch hold of the reel with me, Sandy. This kite-cord's going to snap up like a whip when he lets it go. Ah! I told you."

As Dr. Evans loosed the rope from the straining kite-cord, the latter, relieved of its load, sprang up so suddenly and violently that it hissed through the air and dragged the two boys forward, although they were braced against it.

"Whoa, there!" puffed McGreggor. "They don't pull at all, do they, our little hustlers! I've got a blister on my thumb from this reel. Whoa,

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there! Say, it's lucky I fixed this leather brake."

"Jack! Look!" Harold touched his friend's arm and pointed across the gulf.

"Oh!" murmured Jack.

Dr. Evans' descent had begun, and, in the clear moonlight, the boys could follow every detail of it as distinctly as if they were seated in a theater watching some sensational act of melodrama. There was the silken rope hanging down from the little balcony where the escaping prisoner had lashed it, straight down into the void, and swaying gently as the night wind caught it.

"He's swinging off," whispered McGreggor. "He's got something white in each hand, a handkerchief probably, so the rope won't burn him. Hello! What's that?"

Just as Dr. Evans began to slide down the rope, there came a sound of excited voices, and two Turkish soldiers rushed out upon the lower balcony and pointed, with shouts and gesticulations, to the descending missionary, hanging on the rope not twenty feet away from them. It was too late for Dr. Evans to draw back.

"Oh, save my father!" prayed Harold. Then he turned away in sickening suspense, as one of

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the Turks leveled his weapon at the descending figure.

“*Vurma!*” (“Don’t shoot!”) said the other soldier, sharply.

Sandy faced about with a gasp of joy. Dr. Evans was swinging well below his enemies, and descending rapidly. It seemed as if the soldiers would let him escape without interference, but now one of them darted into the cave and appeared again with something that flashed in the moonlight.

“A hatchet,” frowned Jack. “What does he want with a hatchet?”

Now the two soldiers sprang up the zigzag ladders that led to the upper balcony where the fugitive’s rope was attached. They paused long enough to stand their guns against the rock, then the hatchet man bent eagerly over the knotted line, while his companion peered down into the depths where Wicklow Evans was hanging a hundred feet above-ground, with one leg braced against the precipice. He seemed to be resting.

“*Hasir ol!*” (“Ready!”) called the soldier in authority. “*Kesmech, emri tvereneh kadar bek-leh!*” (“Don’t cut until I give the word!”)

The hatchet man lifted his weapon and stood

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waiting. Then Sandy Evans had his great inspiration.

"I've got to get over there, Jack," he said quickly. "It's our only chance. I'm going to swing across on this kite-line. It will hold me all right. You said these kites will lift a hundred and twenty pounds. I only weigh a hundred and five and—they've *got* to hold me."

"But you can't—"

"Yes, I can. I can hold on by my hands. I've *got* to. It is n't over a hundred and fifty feet across. Steer me for those soldiers. They won't know I'm coming. Now then!"

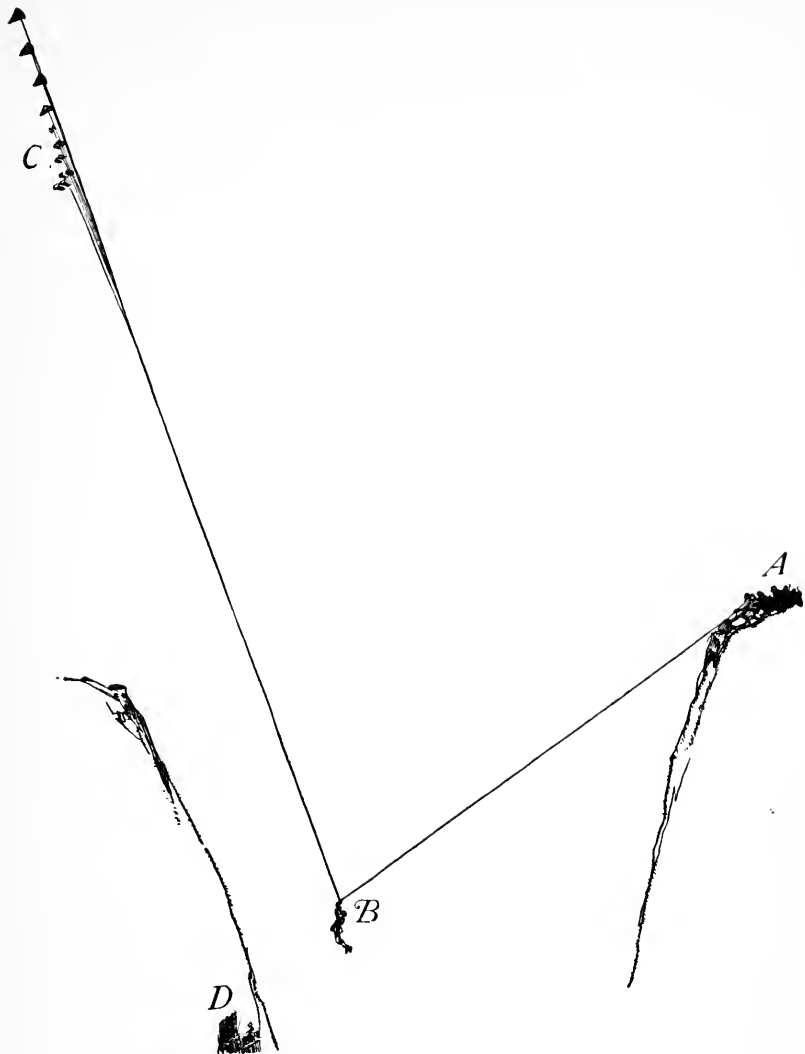
Before McGregor could make further protest, Harold, with a smothered, "Good-by, old boy! Good-by, Deeny!" had seized the kite-cord, and, with a splendid spring, had hurled himself forward into the gulf!

CHAPTER XXIV

OVER THE GULF

SO startled was John McGreggor by this sudden happening that he quite forgot all management of the kites, and let the cord spin out furiously from the reel, a hundred feet or so, before he recovered his self-possession sufficiently to press down the leather brake. It was perhaps as well that he did this, for the impact of Harold's weight in that reckless leap might have snapped the kite-cord if the strain had not been eased. As it was, the cord held firm, and Jack found himself braced against the pull by the clasp of Deeny's mighty arms.

Sandy Evans, meantime, was clinging for his life to the descending line. At first, he dropped so rapidly that he thought the cord must have broken or the kites collapsed—it was worse than the fastest elevator he had ever ridden in, and—that was funny—even now, as he fell, he could hear an elevator man he had known in America, a colored man, saying very distinctly: “*Going down. Call your floors, please.*”



How Harold's leap worked out.

A. The kite-fliers, *B.* Harold, *C.* Kites. *D.* Balcony.

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Presently, Harold's speed diminished, as the kites took up the slackened cord, and he felt himself borne along gently, as if on a wonderful springy cushion. He decided not to look down—yet. There was no use getting dizzy. He would keep his eyes leveled, fixed on the precipice ahead where the cave was. Hello! Where *was* the precipice? Why could n't he stop spinning around like a top? And—oh, dear! if he only had something to keep this kite-cord from cutting into his hands!

Such were Sandy's thoughts during the space of half a minute or less (it seemed an hour to him) while he swung across the cañon in his swift downward-slanting flight; a moment more, and he bumped against the rocky wall. One glance downward showed him how very brief had been the period of his aërial flight, for, as he looked, there on the balcony about fifteen feet beneath him, were the two Turkish soldiers, quite unsuspecting, still watching the descending figure of Wicklow Evans, far below. And the hatchet man was still waiting the word to cut.

Harold suddenly realized that he was getting very tired. He had been hanging by his hands for a long time—sixty seconds—and his arms ached abominably. Why did n't Jack let out

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more kite-cord and lower him down? What was the matter with Jack, anyway? How long did he think a fellow could hang by his hands from a cord that cut like a knife?

Suddenly, the soldier who was watching called out: "*Hasir ol!*" ("Ready!")

The hatchet bearer lifted his blade and, at that instant, Harold, with his last flicker of strength, leaped full at the man, striking him a terrific blow with his feet, and hurling him back, half stunned, upon the balcony. At the same time, the boy caught up the hatchet dropped by the soldier, and turned to face his other adversary. This man, however, overcome by terror fell on his knees and begged for mercy. He was brave enough, as Turkish soldiers go, but he could not undertake to fight fierce spirits of the air that descended upon people out of the night.

With this great advantage, it was easy enough for Evans to tie securely the hands of the two Turks, using for this a length of kite-cord that he had in his pocket. Then, turning quickly to the edge of the balcony, he discovered, to his relief, that the silk rope still offered its shining way of escape. His father had evidently reached the ground.

Pausing only long enough to bind up his chafed

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hands with strips of linen torn from his handkerchief, Harold grasped the rope, and came down its eighty yards without any mishap except a tear in his trousers and a bruise on his leg from bumping into a projection of the precipice.

As the young climber approached the depths of the cañon, he found himself greeted by a murmur of astonished voices, and, glancing down, he met the upturned faces of a group of Bedouins, among whom he saw the stately figure of Khalil.

“Where is my father?” was Harold’s first question, as he sprang to the ground.

The Arab explained that Dr. Evans was safe, but he had suffered an injury to his leg, and two of the men had carried him to a point a little farther on, where, by an easy ascent, he could reach the horses that were waiting.

Without losing an instant, Harold hastened to this spot under the guidance of Khalil, and on the way explained briefly to the Bedouin the miracle of his own crossing over the chasm on the kite-cord.

A little later, Harold entered a miserable, mud-walled stable, where he found his father seated on a wooden bench with his right leg bared to the knee, and Gabriel rubbing it by the light of a smoky lantern.

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“Father!” cried the boy as he pushed forward eagerly.

The doctor started to his feet in joyful surprise.

“Harold! My son! My boy!”

For some moments, they stood clasped in each other’s arms, their hearts full of silent happiness. Then, at the doctor’s insistence, the lad related, as simply as he could, what had happened, and how he had got there. And the father’s eyes, as he listened, shone with gratitude and love, while he murmured again and again, proudly and thankfully, “My boy! My boy!”

After this, it was Harold’s turn, and he asked with concern about his father’s injury. The doctor said he had given one of his knee-tendons a bad wrench, and it was paining him. No, this had not happened in sliding down the rope, although the spinning around had made things worse by striking his knee against a rock—that was why he had descended slowly.

“And now about your mother?” exclaimed Wicklow Evans, suddenly. “You have n’t said a word about your mother. Where is she? Where have you left her? Is she well?” he asked eagerly.

Harold hesitated. He did not know how to

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break the bad news. "I—I think Mother is well, but—no, she is n't with me."

"I suppose you left her in Jerusalem?"

"No," said Harold, "I—I left her in Egypt."

"Egypt?" repeated the doctor in astonishment, and he was about to seek further enlightenment when a rider was heard approaching at a furious pace, and a moment later Khalil burst in to say that they must get into their saddles instantly. The alarm had been given in the convent, and a company of Turkish soldiers were galloping after them in hot pursuit. There was not a second to lose. The party hastily mounted and a minute later were gone into the night.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RING

THE next hour was one of torture to Wicklow Evans, for every movement of the horse sent a throb of pain through his injured leg, and they were obliged to go at the greatest possible speed, owing to the imminent danger behind. More than once the doctor was on the point of declaring that he could endure it no longer, but the thought of his loved ones and a great longing for freedom gave him courage to go on. As they crossed a narrow bridge, however, that led into a rocky defile, the missionary swayed in his saddle, and would have fallen to the ground had not Harold supported him.

There was a hasty consultation with Khalil when it was seen that the doctor could go no farther. He was almost fainting. The Bedouin reflected a moment, and then agreed that they must rest here. After all, there was not a better place in the whole mountain-range for them to stop. And at once he gave instructions



The missionary swayed in his saddle, and would have fallen to the ground.

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to his men. They were to divide into two bodies and ambush themselves at either end of the bridge. They were to let the Turks cross over, and then the Bedouins ahead were to open fire from the rocks. When the soldiers turned to retreat across the bridge, the Bedouins behind were to shoot them down. Not a man must escape.

During this, Harold had assisted his father to alight, and had spread a blanket on the ground to make him more comfortable. The doctor in his weakness and distress did not at first understand what the Arabs were planning, but as soon as it was explained to him, he positively refused to permit such a massacre. Khalil declared that it was their lives against the Turks' lives, and the latter had thirty men to fifteen. They would not have a chance in the world if they tried to fight the soldiers on an equality.

"We will not fight them at all," replied the missionary.

In vain Khalil protested. Dr. Evans was firm. Come what might, he would not tolerate any plan of bloodshed. And after wavering a moment, Harold stood by his father with all the authority that Basil had given him. There should be no bloodshed.

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While they were still discussing this, three riders approached rapidly out of the shadows, and were seen to be Nasr-ed-Din, and Jack, and the Bedouin guide; they had hurried down from across the ravine and arrived breathless with news that the soldiers were just behind them. Even as they spoke, there came the shouts of horsemen dashing along the mountain side, and several stray shots.

It was a hard situation for Dr. Evans. No one realized the danger better than he, and this danger threatened his own son—his only son—and his son's friend, who was now hurriedly introduced to him.

"Harold," said the doctor, earnestly, "I want you and Jack to leave me and go on with these Bedouins. Go to Damascus as I wrote you and—"

"It's no use, Father," interrupted the boy. "I can't do it."

"You must do it. Nasr-er-Din will stay with me. Eh, Deeny?" The missionary held out his hand, and the faithful servant kissed it with affectionate mumblings. "Go, my boy, before it's too late."

The shouts were coming nearer. It was only a matter of minutes now when the Turks would

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be upon them. Khalil spoke again impatiently, saying that he and his men were going. They did not propose to stay there and be killed. They would fight to the last for the effendis, but, if the effendis would not allow them to fight, then they must save their own lives.

As the Bedouins mounted their horses for the start, the missionary made a last appeal to his son to leave him.

“No,” said Harold firmly, “but—” he turned to his friend, “*you ’d* better go, Jack. Father and I—we ’re in this together, but—why should you risk your life? Take the ring, old boy, and go on to Damascus and see Abdul Pasha. That ’s the most sensible thing. That ’s the way to save us.” He drew the ring from his pocket and offered it to his friend.

With all his heart John McGregor wanted to go. He would have given everything he had in the world, his moving-picture plans, his trip around the world, everything, to be off on a horse, out of this fix, out of this land, back in some nice safe town like Chicago, where blood-thirsty soldiers did not come rushing at you out of the mountains. And yet when he looked into the strong, calm face of this gray-eyed doctor (he could see the likeness to Sandy in the eyes),

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there was something in him that stirred against the idea of running away.

"I—I guess I'll stay," he said quietly, and then, in sudden fear of weakening, he motioned fiercely to the Bedouins to be gone. "*Haidee, ghit!*" ("Now hurry!") he cried.

"Well, it is settled now," sighed Dr. Evans, as the Arabs galloped off. "Whatever is to happen, will happen. You are brave boys, both of you, but—let me warn you not to resist these Turks. Look at them pleasantly. Speak to them pleasantly. They do not wish to harm us. They have not harmed me—that is to say, there was one exception. An officer struck me back of the knee as I was going up the ladder. That is what hurt my leg."

"The brute!" cried Harold.

"No, no!" answered the missionary, gently. "He did not understand. There is a purpose back of all that we suffer, and—I want you boys to hold this thought, hold it hard every minute, that God is near us and is watching over us, and that we need fear no harm or wrong except the harm or wrong that we do ourselves. Let your prayer be what mine has been for years: '*Keep me free from fear, and make me kind.*'"

Scarcely had Dr. Evans spoken these words,

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when the rushing horses of the Turkish soldiers thundered across the bridge, then drew up sharply as the pursuers saw the Americans before them.

A harsh order rang out, whereupon the horsemen dismounted and advanced upon the unresisting group, missionary, boys, and servant. Then things happened rapidly. First, Nasr-ed-Din was seized and carried off, fighting so desperately, in spite of the doctor's admonitions, that it took four men to subdue him. Next, Dr. Evans himself was taken, and his hands securely tied. Then Jack McGregor was similarly treated. And these three, by order of the officer in command, were at once thrown upon horses, none too gently, and borne away under a strong guard.

Harold was left alone with the officer in command, a fierce-looking Turk with bushy eyebrows and bristling gray mustache. To the boy's surprise, he spoke English with what seemed to be a German accent.

"Iss it true that you sent up a—what do you call it? A—*Drache?*—a—*troustig?*"

"A kite?" supplied Evans, recognizing the Turkish word.

"Yes, you sent one up? Did you?"

"I sent nine up," nodded the boy.

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“Nine kites!” The officer studied Harold with incredulous interest. “You used a kite-cord to cross the *Thal*—the *decre*—the—ah, yes, the valley?”

“I would n’t call it a valley. It’s a gorge, a ravine, a chasm. It’s too deep for a valley, and too narrow. It is n’t more than fifty yards across.”

“No matter. You came across this—gorge, this—chasm, whatever you call it, on a kite-cord? You mean to tell me that?”

“Certainly I do.”

The officer bit nervously at his short mustache with strong yellow teeth, and his face grew very red.

“I do not believe it!” he declared.

Harold lifted his head defiantly. “It’s true all the same.”

At this, the officer flew into a purple rage. “You dare to contradict me? I’ll make you suffer for this—this *unverschämtheit*—this *outanmas*—this—” but the English word would not come.

“You mean impertinence,” translated the boy, “but you’re wrong, sir; I don’t mean to be impertinent.”

The Turk’s anger had now passed all bounds, and he ordered his men to take the prisoner

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away, the dog of a prisoner. Let them search him, first, for weapons or papers.

Having thus delivered himself, the officer lighted a cigarette, and puffed furiously at it while two rough soldiers went through Harold's clothes. The touch of their heavy hands brought home to the boy the seriousness of his situation. He remembered his father's last instructions that he must speak pleasantly to these Turks, and even look at them pleasantly. He was conscious that he had been glaring at the officer while the men searched him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," the boy began, in his pleasantest manner, but the Turk brushed him away with a contemptuous wave of his hand, and, turning to his men, asked if they had secured everything that was about the prisoner's person. The soldiers bowed respectfully, and tendered the articles found, a pistol, a money belt, a pocket-knife, a box of matches, a pencil, and a letter. It was the letter that Dr. Evans had dropped from the cave.

"I beg your pardon, sir," Harold began again, and his voice and his eyes were so conciliatory that the officer at last vouchsafed a reply, although it was a rough one.

"Speak when you are spoken to!" he snapped.

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"Yes, sir," answered Evans.

"Why did you stop and let us take you?" the officer asked presently. "Why did you not fight? Is it that you were afraid?"

Harold flushed, but controlled himself. "No, sir, only—my father does not believe in fighting. He has spent all his life doing good to people, and—besides, he has hurt his leg, and—he must have attention," pleaded the boy.

The answer was a brutal gesture. "He shall have attention, and you, too." The officer turned abruptly to his men. "Take this prisoner away. Put him in irons—with the others. Wait! What is this?"

As he spoke, the angry leader had opened the envelope containing Dr. Evans's letter, and the ring had fallen out.

"It's a ring that my father sent me."

"Yes, yes, but where did he get this ring?"

"It was given to him by a friend."

For some moments the officer did not speak, but stood frowning at the strange inscription carved on the brown stone of the ring. The soldiers, taking this silence of their leader as a sign of dismissal, started to lead the young American away, but Harold sprang to the officer's side in one last desperate appeal.



Harold sprang to the officer's side in one last desperate appeal.

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“Don’t let them be cruel to my father, sir,” he cried. “And don’t take me away from him. If you only knew what pain he is in from his leg. He almost fell from his horse. I’ll bear anything afterward, sir, anything you like. I’m young, and it does n’t matter, but—let me take care of my father, sir, and don’t put him in irons; please don’t.”

Now the Turk looked up, and, as he saw the soldiers dragging Harold off, his eyes blazed.

“What are you doing?” he thundered at them.

“We—we thought, sir,” stammered one of the men, “we thought you said to—”

“Take your hands off this gentleman. Get on your horses and ride to camp. Tell the officer in charge that there has been a mistake. His orders are to treat the other two gentlemen and their servant as my friends. Understand me? *As my friends!* Now ride, if you value your skins!”

CHAPTER XXVI

BLACK EAGLES

IT seemed as if Providence was beginning to smile upon the sorely pressed fugitives. As suddenly as the wind, earlier in the night, had shifted from north to east, so now, at dawn, did this brutal Turkish officer (Lieutenant Cherik was his name) change to kindness and devotion. The Americans were at once set at liberty, their possessions were restored to them, and they were shown every attention.

"I don't know how you work it, Sandy," exclaimed McGregor, an hour later in camp, as they sat down to a breakfast served with generous hospitality in the officers' own tent. "This is the second fire-eater you've tamed. He makes 'em sit right up and be good, sir," Jack turned, laughing, to Dr. Evans.

"I did nothing," said Sandy, modestly. "It was Father who won over the Greek monk, and it is Father's ring that has helped us now. Besides, if you had n't been a wonder in sending

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up kites—yes, you are, Jack, you know you are. Why, Father, he made the dandiest reel with a leather brake—you strap it around your waist, and—” Harold stopped short with a new thought. “By the way, what about those kites? What did you do with ’em?”

“Tied ’em up with pink ribbons and laid ’em on the piano to cool off,” said Jack, with a grin. “You mountain antelope! What do you think I did with ’em! I let ’em go. I had to and came chasing down the mountain after you. Say, but this is certainly a bully good breakfast!”

After the meal they were shown to a comfortable tent where they might sleep off the fatigues and emotions of the night. Before retiring, however, Harold indicated to Jack that he wished to be alone with his father.

“You’re going to tell him—about your mother?” whispered McGreggor.

“Yes. I can’t keep it any longer.”

“Good luck, old boy!” Jack gave his friend’s hand a squeeze, and, strolling out of the tent, joined a circle of soldiers whom Deeny was amusing with his stories.

“What’s the matter, my son?” asked the doctor, when the two were alone. “You look worried.”

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"I am worried," replied Harold. "There's something I've got to tell you, Father."

Dr. Evans studied the boy and into his eyes there came a look of sudden understanding. "It's about your mother," he said.

"Why—er—yes."

"You don't know where your mother is."

Harold stared in amazement. "Did Deeny tell you?"

"No one told me," answered the missionary, gravely, "but I know it—I feel it. Tell me everything."

Harold needed no urging, and went rapidly over all that had happened since his landing at Alexandria, a few weeks before. Was it only a few weeks? It seemed like years.

The doctor asked many questions, and made Harold repeat every word of the message his mother had sent to the Virgin's tree.

"I see the same hand back of this, and the same motive," he murmured.

"What is the motive, Father?"

"To break up our work at Adana. We bring in the light, my boy, the light of knowledge and wisdom and love, and the Turks hate the light; they fear it; they will do anything to put it out. For years they have tried to bribe us, to frighten

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us; they were even ready to kill us; but they are cowards, so they did this."

"And—what will the end be?" hesitated the boy.

There was a glow of prophetic vision in the missionary's eyes as he answered:

"The end? The end will be that our work will go on. The light will shine. Your mother and I will be back in Adana soon—soon!"

Before they slept the father and son knelt down at the tent door, and, under the calm Judean sky, which seemed brighter and nearer than usual, they asked God to guard and bless their dear absent one, and to give them cheerfulness and strength for the task and the trials before them.

It was not until late in the afternoon that the missionary had a talk with Lieutenant Cherek, and learned what it was that had changed the officer from harshness to friendliness. It was simple enough. There was nothing mysterious about the ring, it had no talisman power, but it came from a very great and powerful man, Abdul Pasha, to whose service the officer was devoted. Lieutenant Cherek would now go to very unusual lengths to serve Dr. Evans. His immediate instructions required him to take Dr.

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Evans, overland, to a prison near Damascus, where the American was to be left.

“By whose orders?” asked the doctor.

Lieutenant Cherik did not know. The orders had come to the Jerusalem garrison. Then these orders must be carried out? They must still go to Damascus? Yes, they must certainly go to Damascus, and they must start immediately, or suspicion would be aroused. Furthermore, in the future, the relations between Lieutenant Cherik and his supposed prisoners must be as brief and businesslike as possible.

All of this having been explained to the boys, and certain preliminary arrangements having been made (including the transferring of Dr. Evans's effects from Mar Saba), the expedition set forth toward Jerusalem, although it was understood that they would turn off to the north before reaching the Holy City.

As they rode along, Dr. Evans asked Harold and Jack to describe their experiences in the Dead Sea valley, and he told them various interesting things about this strange region. In former centuries, he said, there was much big game here, the lion, the bison, and the hippopotamus, but these animals had all become extinct. Speaking of the extreme saltness of the Dead Sea, the

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doctor mentioned that, while a hundred pounds of ordinary sea-water yield six pounds of salt on evaporation, a hundred pounds of Dead Sea water yield twenty-five pounds of salt. That is why no fish can live there.

“Father,” asked Harold, presently, “are they going to send this whole company of soldiers with us all the way to Damascus?”

“Oh, no. The lieutenant tells me he will keep only six or seven men after to-morrow morning. The reason they sent so many was on account of the Bedouins. How happy we ought to be that we did not consent to any shooting!”

A little later, Jack announced that he had a question to ask. “As I understand it, sir, this Lieutenant Cherek is going back on his orders. He’s treating us like gentlemen, whereas he started out by treating us like dogs, and that’s what he’s supposed to do. Am I right?”

“Yes, you’re about right,” agreed the doctor.

“Well, how do you know that some of these soldiers that he sends back to Jerusalem to-morrow morning won’t give the whole thing away?”

Dr. Evans said that there was only a slight chance of this happening, for the reason that Turkish soldiers have scarcely any feeling of duty or loyalty toward the government, which is

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really a corrupt machine of plunder and oppression.

"They 'd be afraid of getting themselves into trouble, would n't they?" put in Harold.

"Exactly."

That night they camped in some thatched mud houses on high ground about seven miles to the northeast of Jerusalem, and early the next morning, with an escort of only six soldiers, the little company reached the great highway of the Bible that runs north and south from Bethlehem to Galilee, and that would start them on their journey to Damascus. Soon they found themselves advancing through a less rugged and more verdant region, rolling hills spread with silver-tinged olive groves, broad fields of grain and sesame, rich pastures sprinkled with thousands of brilliant poppies, and grazed over by flocks of fat sheep, as in the days of David.

At about ten o'clock they passed by the famous meeting place of David and Jonathan and here the boys stirred up a flock of red-tailed thrushes. A little later they came to a typical Syrian village with flat-roofed mud houses. Here they found, in pleasant contrast to its filthy surroundings, a spic-span American school with flowers all about it where little native girls are taught



P. Lalor Kelly

One of the thatched mud houses.

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cleanliness and godliness by sweet-mannered women from New England. Dr. Evans was warmly welcomed by these ladies who showed the visitors through the school rooms and had the



Typical Syrian village, showing mud houses and minaret of mosque.

pupils sing in shrill unison one of their quaint native songs.

McGreggor was much amused when a little Fellaheen girl of nine with whip-cord braids down her back, stepped forward and, in a piping voice, read an original composition on the mouse. The composition was as follows:

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THE MOUSE

BY HAIGAZOON TAKENTLIAN

There are good and bad animals in the world. Of the bad animals one is a mouse. This animal is very diligent and very wily. If he sees a cat he hides some place. He has four feet, a tail and two bright eyes. This animal is very bad. If you put some bread or something any place he smells it and carries it to another place. And if you should go any place after your return to the house you could not find anything in the box.

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Jack. “You could n’t find anything in the box. I’ll bet you could n’t. Say, I must have a copy of that composition. I’ll send it home to the Governor.”

After this two hours of fairly hard riding brought the travelers to the ruined site of Bethel where they had luncheon, and then, at the suggestion of Lieutenant Cherik, rested in the shade until the great heat was over. Jack explored an enormous cistern near by while Harold remained with his father who pointed out that this was said to be the spot where Jacob slept and dreamed that he saw a ladder reaching up to Heaven.

Whether it was the suggestion of this familiar story or the result of natural fatigue, the mis-

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sionary presently leaned back against an olive-tree and, with a long sigh, closed his eyes.

Noticing this, Harold picked up a book and began to read, turning the pages carefully so as to avoid making any noise. A moment later, however, he saw that his father's eyes were open, and were fixed on the far horizon with a strange eager look, as if the doctor saw something or was thinking of something that filled him with intense happiness. Harold searched the peaceful panorama for any cause of these joyful emotions, but he could find nothing.

Suddenly as the boy wondered at this, his father's face contracted, his eyelids narrowed, and the radiant expression gave place to one of distress and alarm. This continued for perhaps half a minute, after which, with another sigh, which seemed to express joy or resignation, the missionary closed his eyes, and again rested against the olive-tree.

For some minutes Sandy Evans puzzled over this singular occurrence. Was his father awake or not awake? Should he speak of the matter to him or not speak of it? He had just decided that it was only a sign of nervous fatigue and might as well be left unmentioned, when the doctor stirred uneasily, then roused himself in quite

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a natural way, and sat up exactly as one does after taking a nap.

"Ah! My boy!" said the missionary, with his usual cheery smile.

"Did you have a good sleep, Father?" asked Harold.

"Why—did I go to sleep?"

"Did n't you?"

The doctor paused as if to collect himself, and it seemed to Harold that he caught just the shade of a startled, puzzled look in the older man's eyes.

"I have not been asleep," he said, quietly, and that ended the incident for the moment.

A couple of hours later, however, as the father and son were riding on, with the purple shadows of the Samaritan hills lengthening about them, Dr. Evans said seriously, "Harold, there is something I must say to you."

"Yes, Father."

"It is about that ring, the one that saved us so wonderfully. You have it? You have kept it carefully?"

"Of course. Shall I give it back to you?"

"No, no, but—guard it, my son, as your most precious treasure. Don't carry it loose in your pocket. Strap it securely in your money belt.

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When you get to Damascus, everything may depend upon your having this ring."

There was something in his father's tone that vaguely alarmed the boy.

"But, Father, why do you say when *I* get to Damascus? We will be there together; we will do everything together, won't we?"

The missionary's face was still grave as he replied: "I hope and pray that we shall, my boy. We have been marvelously guided and protected so far, and things seem to be going well with us, but—we never can be sure how God will work out His great purposes. It might be, it may be, that you and I, my son, will be separated again."

"Father, why do you look so—so solemn?" cried Harold. "What is it? What has happened?"

"Something very strange, my son," answered the missionary; "something that makes me happy and—sad."

"Yes, yes. Go on!"

"You remember when we were resting under the olive-trees this afternoon and you asked if I had been asleep?"

"Yes, Father."

"I told you I was not asleep. That was true, but—*I was not awake, either.*"

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Harold stared, feeling sure that he had misunderstood his father's words.

"Not awake?" he repeated. "You mean you *were* asleep?"

The doctor shook his head. "No. And I was not awake in the ordinary sense. *I was more than awake.* Listen, my boy. When a man has spent ten months on a barren rock looking out on a dead wilderness, he learns things that are not in the books. He learns to think differently, more intensely; he learns to—to think *with his soul*, if I may so express it. And the soul has powers, Harold, as little known as wireless telegraphy was known a few years ago."

"I can understand that," nodded the boy.

"For thousands of years," continued Dr. Evans, "the Dead Sea valley, where I was, has been the home and the tomb of silent men who learned to think with their souls, and—I can't explain it, but—these men left behind them more than the dry bones and skulls that line their caves."

Harold gave a start of surprise. "You don't mean—"

"Yes, dozens of them; but that is not important. How can I say it simply? You know what a storage battery is? Can you imagine a spir-

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itual storage battery? I have felt—in fact I know that the great Mar Saba gorge, so deep and silent, is such a gathering place of spiritual power. It must be so. It was this power all about me that strengthened my prayers and quickened my vision so that—I could *speak* to your mother's soul.”

“And—that was how I found you—because Mother got your message?” marveled Harold.

“Yes, my boy. And it may be that God will lead you to your mother in the same way. I say this because, for the first time, such a message, or vision, has come to me. It came while we were there under the olive-trees.”

Harold was listening with absorbed attention. “Go on, Father. Please go on.”

With the utmost confidence, Dr. Evans proceeded: “We are to see your mother in Damascus, my boy. We are to see her in a great white-and-gold room with white-and-gold columns. There are red curtains between the columns and black eagles guarding the door. I saw your mother beckoning to us from this room, but we could not go to her because the eagles stopped us.”

“That was a dream,” protested Harold.

“No, it was not a dream. It was very different

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from a dream. And, listen! When everything had failed and we were quite discouraged, you did something, my boy, I can't remember what it was, but immediately the eagles flew away, and the doors opened, and the red curtains were drawn, and we went into the white-and-gold room where your mother was."

"Where is this white-and-gold room?" thrilled the boy.

The doctor shook his head. "I only know that it is in Damascus. Wait! I saw more than that. I saw you and Jack and Deeny walking along a narrow street. You were in great trouble, and Jack was weak and ill."

"But you, Father? Were n't you with us?"

"No, I was not with you, and—that is why I fear we are to be separated. If this happens, Harold, I charge you to go to Damascus with all speed. You won't forget or fail, my boy?"

"I won't forget or fail," replied Harold, earnestly. Then he added, with an odd little smile, "I *wish* you could remember what it was that I did to make those black eagles fly away."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GREAT HIGHWAY

IN spite of Dr. Evans's forebodings, all went well with the travelers during their journey northward along the great highway. Lieutenant Cherik continued to treat his prisoners with the utmost consideration. He allowed them to select their own camping places at night and resting-places through the heat of the day, and even to make short detours for the purpose of visiting spots made historic by the Bible story. So long as they reached Damascus on the eighth day, the officer would be satisfied; they might lay out the journey as they pleased. Nor was any check put upon Jack McGreggor's picture-taking activities.

"Say, Sandy, this gentleman-prisoner business is *great!*" declared Jack. "Dandy horses, the best stuff to eat, five soldiers to take care of us, and it does n't cost us a cent! Think what this means in our scheme! Why, it's the chance of our lives! Here's your father choke-full of information about the country, and here we are

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with a little corker of a moving-picture machine, the first one that ever blew across the Jordan! Bet you we get two thousand dollars' worth of films before we strike Damascus! Two thousand is putting it low."

"I hope so," said Sandy; "that is to say, I suppose you know about moving pictures, but—" he was thinking of the strange vision, or message, that had come to his father under the old olive-tree.

"There 's no 'but' about it," replied McGregor, briskly. "We 're headed for a big success—straight for it. We 're the boys who land the thing we go after. Yes, sir! Did n't we go after your father? And now it 's money—a barrel of it! Why, the vaudeville houses will go crazy over the stuff we 've got already. And wait till we strike some of these new places— What 's that town where the witch used to live?"

"The witch? Oh, the witch of Endor?"

"That 's it. We 're going there; your father said so."

Jack had conceived a profound respect for Dr. Evans, who, the boy discovered, knew all about birds and animals and wild flowers, and could tell thrilling stories of his adventures in hunting the wild boar, and fighting Asiatic cholera, and

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saving wretched Armenians during the massacre at Adana.

“Why, he can do anything, your governor can!” McGregor decided enthusiastically; “and he seems to know about everything. For a missionary he—he’s a peach!”

“I knew you’d like him,” smiled Sandy.

Although the boys had been in the Holy Land for weeks, it was only now, in talks with Dr. Evans as they rode along, that Jack got his first clear idea of Palestine as a whole. What a little place it was, considering its great importance in the world! New York State would divide up into five Palestines, said the doctor, and North Dakota into ten, and Texas into thirty. New Jersey was about as large as this whole theater of Bible history. New Jersey!

And what extraordinary contrasts in climate were here in this tiny land! Palestine! A rugged strip between ocean and desert—salt-water breezes meeting the parched and withering sirocco! Palestine! With the glistening peaks of Mount Hermon on its northern border, where the snow-fields never melt, then, stretching away to the south, the Jordan valley, deepest fissure in the earth’s surface, far below the level of the sea, with palms and orange groves and tropical

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vegetation, one of the hottest places in the world! Jack thrilled with newly awakened interest as the doctor described all this.

They camped one night near Jacob's Well and Joseph's tomb, in the historic valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and here it was that the boys met (and photographed) a Moslem wedding procession, and watched the bride, her head covered with strings of silver coins, as she threw handfuls of corn to the birds, according to native custom, and then anointed the stones of the well with butter to keep off evil spirits.

They also witnessed the ceremony when the priest said to the bridegroom (Dr. Evans translating): "I now give thee this wife in subjection. Wilt thou be her master?"

And the man said: "With the help of God I will."

Then the priest asked the woman: "Wilt thou be obedient to him?"

And she replied: "I am obedient according to the order of Allah." Which caused Jack to remark that this was no place for a suffragette.

The next morning they passed by the ruined columns of Samaria, all that is left of Herod's splendid palace, and were startled here to see a wild looking man strolling about unconcernedly

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among the villagers with scarcely a shred of clothing. Dr. Evans explained that this man was crazy and it is a Moslem superstition that a crazy man must be allowed to go and come as he pleases, nor must any one interfere with him, lest he cast the evil eye.

Again, they camped among the date-palms and orange groves of Jenin, where Jehu raced his chariot and horses, and smote Ahaziah. And the next day they crossed the wonderful plain of Esdraelon, carpeted with rich greens and abundant flowers, and cut through by the silver thread of the river Kishon. Here, said the missionary, were things worth seeing and thinking about. On yonder slope to the east lay Cana of Galilee. There to the north, hidden by purple hills, was Nazareth. And that round-topped mountain at the edge of the plain, there where the griffin vultures and golden eagles were soaring, was Mount Tabor, the scene of a famous battle between French and Moslems, when the latter, in spite of superior numbers, were overcome by a trick of the great Napoleon.

What Sandy Evans remembered most distinctly about Cana and Galilee was the fact that he got about a million thorns in his trousers in brushing against a tall cactus hedge. And what Jack

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remembered about Nazareth (after they had left it behind) was its frightfully steep streets, a group of laden camels drinking at the fountain, a native mother with a baby swung on her back, and the friendliness of a German photographer, who supplied him with precious materials for developing his films.



Nazareth mother carrying baby on her back.

As they passed through the village of Nain, a miserable cluster of mud hovels, the boys had an adventure that might easily have ended seriously. They had stopped to take a picture of what was pointed out as the widow's house, now scarcely more than a heap of stones, and, while Jack busied himself with the kodak, Harold searched about for some interesting souvenir of this

sacred place. Suddenly, as he climbed along the ruined wall, he came upon a snake coiled in the sun.

"I say, Jack, here's a snake," he called. "I'm going to take a shot at him." And, drawing his

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revolver, he fired at the ugly creature from a distance of about ten feet.

“Huh! You ’re a fine shot!” laughed McGregor, as the snake wriggled away and disappeared between two large stones in the wall.



Nazareth boys racing for prize.

“I ’ll get him out,” said Evans. “Ah! see his tail. Come out here, Mr. Snake. There! I told you I ’d get him.”

As he spoke, Harold seized the projecting tail, and, with a quick movement, snapped the snake out upon the ground. What would have hap-

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pened next can never be known, for Dr. Evans arrived at that moment, and killed the angry reptile with a stick. Then he turned to the boys.

"You don't know what you're doing!" he said quietly; but they saw that his face was pale.

"Why, Father, he's only a little fellow. He is n't over two feet long."

"A little fellow!" answered the missionary. "Do you see that flat head? He's a viper, one of the most deadly in the East!"

That night, they pitched their tents on a bare hillside near the historic village of Endor, and here they discovered many caves in the rock such as that in which the old witch must have dwelt in the days of Saul. In one of these caves they killed a great bat that measured twenty inches across the wings, a rare specimen, Dr. Evans told them. And in the village they found a hideous old crone who might have passed for the witch herself, but who proved to be a kind-hearted person and sold them delicious honey that came from a hive made from large tubes of sun-dried mud, scores of these tubes being piled horizontally in a pyramid and the whole covered over with mud and branches.

"That's the queerest looking bee-hive I ever

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saw," declared Jack. "I'll just snap it for our collection."

The travelers had now completed half their journey to Damascus and no harm had befallen them. The fifth day brought them to the ruined cities that fringe the northern shore of the Sea of



The Lake of Galilee.

Tiberias, or Galilee. On the sixth day, they forded the Jordan, with a company of Moslem pilgrims, and turned to the north toward the snow-covered heights of Mount Hermon that lay straight before them, a long day's journey. And one day more would bring them to Damascus.

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"I don't believe there's going to be any trouble, Father," remarked Harold, confidently.

"I hope not, my son," replied the missionary; "but remember what I told you. It's just as well to be prepared."



Pilgrims fording the Jordan.

"I'll remember," said the boy, and he thought again of those mysterious black eagles.

A little later, Harold took the precious ring from his money belt and put it on his third finger. Finding that it fitted snugly, he decided to wear it.

On the afternoon of the seventh day, the company found themselves approaching the outlying

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hills of the long Jebel Sunnin range, white with snow, above which mighty Hermon rears its majestic head. They decided to rest for an hour in an apricot orchard, and the boys, stretched on the ground, were just beginning to enjoy themselves under trees bending with golden fruit, when Jack espied a caravan coming down the mountain. It was a caravan of pilgrims from Damascus, Deeny said, on its way to Mecca, that most sacred city of the Moslems into which no Christian may penetrate. In an instant, the young Americans were on their feet, fired with the same idea. Here was a picture worth taking. A caravan of pilgrims going to Mecca!

A few words of explanation gave the young photographers permission to ride ahead and try to secure this coveted film. Nasr-ed-Din went with them, and a rag-tag soldier to look after a mule that carried the picture apparatus.

"We'll have to be everlastingly foxy about this," cautioned Sandy, as they rode forward. "You know these pilgrims object to having their pictures taken."

"They'll never know it," said McGregor. "We'll lie in ambush for 'em, have the machine set up in the bushes so they won't notice it, and grind the thing out as they go past."

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Hurrying on, the boys selected a spot where the road turned sharply and where a cluster of oleanders on rising ground gave them exactly the vantage-point they needed. In a couple of minutes Jack's deft fingers had the apparatus ready, and Harold stood eager to help.

"Tell Deeny to keep that mule still!" said McGregor, for the animal, annoyed by Syrian flies, was jangling his bells. "Hark! They're coming!"

The murmur of the approaching caravan was now distinctly audible. Dogs barked, men shouted, and, as the line drew nearer, the anxious watchers could hear the hoarse grunting of the camels under their heavy loads and the urging of their drivers.

"Ready! Start her up!" whispered Evans, on a signal from Nasr-ed-Din, and the picture machine began to click softly.

A moment later, the caravan appeared. And what a sight it was! All the costumes of the East were passing before them in review—Arabs, Persians, Turks, Abyssinians, black, white, and yellow, men, women, and children, rich and poor, dignified pashas on stately dromedaries, half-naked slaves trudging along on foot, hundreds of camels, some of them bearing in lit-

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ters pilgrims who were fat, or lazy, or sick, soldiers with flashing weapons, horsemen in gay cloaks and fantastic head-dresses, holy men, fighting men, dervishes, veiled women, and scores of beasts of burden carrying tents and boxes and provisions for the long journey through the Arabian desert.

At one moment, there came a pause in the advance, whereupon three of the dervishes, wearing black hats shaped like flower-pots, and tight-fitting white robes, began a strange whirling dance that went faster and faster, until, presently, they were spinning on their toes like three human tops.

When it was all over and the last straggler had passed on, Jack sank back with a sigh of relief.

“Say, Sandy, I want to tell you that’s some picture!” he declared. “It’s worth a thousand dollars, if it’s worth a cent. Why, those whirling dervishes alone are worth five hundred!”

Moving along the mountain side the boys came to a deep gorge at the bottom of which a rapid stream tumbled over black rocks. Jack walked to the edge of this gorge and looked down. About forty feet below them on the opposite side there jutted out a broad shoulder of ground

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spread over with boulders of various shapes and sizes. The sight of these gave Jack an idea.

“Sandy,” he called. “Look! See that yellow rock down there? Bet you a quarter I can chuck a stone and hit it before you can.”

Harold picked up a stone and, throwing it carelessly, hit the rock squarely.

“Good shot! I owe you a quarter. Try another.”

“You don’t owe me a quarter.”

“Sure I do. We were throwing for a quarter. If I had won you’d have paid me, would n’t you?”

This placed Harold in a difficult position and the end of it was that they threw at the rock three times more for a quarter a throw. And Jack won, three times in succession.

“It’s a silly game,” said Sandy.

“It takes skill just the same. Ah, there she goes!” cried Jack as his stone crashed against the rock and broke into pieces. “Go on!”

“Oh, well, I can hit it if I want to. There!” Harold missed, however, and owed Jack seventy-five cents.

“Throw you once, double or quits,” proposed McGregor.

Sandy’s face was flushed. He had never

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gambled in his life, but he could not resist Jack's challenge and, aiming carefully, he threw again—and lost.

“A dollar and a half!” chuckled Jack.

Now the boys were fairly caught by the spirit of hazard and for twenty minutes they continued this foolish pastime while Nasr-ed-Din slumbered peacefully under a neighboring tamarisk tree. At the end of this time Harold's indebtedness had increased to four dollars and a half.

“Double or quits again?” said Jack. “Are you game?”

Evans hesitated. His conscience was troubling him, but he was drawn by the world-old lure of gambling. Besides, he could not afford to lose four dollars and a half.

“I never did anything like this before, but, as long as we've started—all right, I'll go you—once more—for the last time.”

Again they threw and again Harold lost.

“Nine dollars,” said Jack.

And now came a quarter of an hour that neither boy forgot to the end of his days, so vividly did it impress upon each the power and the harm of gambling. Instead of stopping, as they had agreed to, the boys threw five times more. double or quits (by this time they had lost all sense

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of values), and five times in succession, by skill or luck or fate, John McGregor was the first to score. And his winnings increased amazingly; eighteen, thirty-six, seventy-two, one hundred and forty-four, two hundred and eighty-eight dollars.

"Jack," said Harold in awe-struck tones. "I owe you two hundred and eighty-eight dollars!"

"Gosh!" marveled McGregor. "And five hundred for my share of those pictures—the dervishes and pilgrims—that's seven hundred and eighty-eight for the day. Pretty fair business! If I could keep that up—say for a hundred days—"

But Harold's face was white. "This is not a joke," he said. "I owe you that money. We were playing for fair—weren't we?"

McGregor began to feel sorry as he saw his friend's distress.

"It was only a sort of a game," he stammered, but Evans came straight to the point.

"If you had lost you would have paid me, would n't you?"

"Why—er—"

"Would you have paid me or not?" the boy demanded.

"Yes, I would."

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"Then I've got to pay you and—I don't know how I'm going to do it. I have n't got two hundred and eighty-eight dollars in the world."

"Pshaw! You don't have to worry about that, besides—" Here Jack had a sudden inspiration, born of generosity. "Besides," he continued, "there's an easy way to fix it. All we have to do is throw at the old rock two or three times more and you'll be sure to hit it first. Then we'll be square."

"You mean double or quits?"

"Sure. That's the only way. Come on! You're a better shot than I am. There! I told you!" Jack threw and missed.

This was Harold's chance and the temptation was too strong for him. He caught up a smooth round stone about the size of a tennis ball and, trying his best, hurled it at the yellow rock, missing it by about an inch.

"Hard luck! We'll have to throw off the tie. Now then!"

Jack did his best *not* to hit the rock (without seeming to do so) but, somehow, his calculations went astray and he struck it squarely, while Harold's stone flew wide.

There was a silence of dismay. Harold's heart sank to the depths.

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"Let's see," he said weakly. "That makes—that makes—"

"Never mind what it makes. You've got to throw again. You *can't* lose all the time."

"I'm going to stop," said Evans.

"You're crazy! It is n't fair—to me. I got you into this thing and—"

"I owe you five hundred and seventy-six dollars, Jack," said Evans solemnly, "and I'll pay it—sometime."

Before McGregor could make further protest their attention was diverted by a series of quick shots down the valley that brought Nasred-Din sharply to his feet.

"Hello! What's that?"

"Sounded like a signal."

The boys looked at each other in alarm, while Deeny hurried forward to reconnoiter.

"We'd better get back," urged Harold.

"Wait!" said Jack. "We can't go like this. I'll throw you once more—double or quits."

Harold paused and wavered. Then, with nervous haste, he picked up another stone and threw it swiftly. This time it went straight to the mark. And McGregor missed.

"Is n't that disgusting?" mourned Jack (he really only pretended to mourn). "There I was

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five hundred and seventy-six dollars ahead! Say, I'll go you again for a quarter. I've got to make a quarter out of you anyway."

Harold looked his friend steadily in the eyes and understood. For a moment he could hardly speak.

"You—you're a good fellow, Jack. I'm ashamed of myself. I've done wrong and—I've had my lesson. Now listen to me. *I'll never gamble again as long as I live, never!* There's my hand on it."

McGreggor coughed to hide his agitation. "Guess that's a good idea, old boy, and—anyhow, there's my hand."

In the loyal clasp that followed there was in each a precious quickening of moral fiber and a strengthening in the bond of their friendship.

Presently Deeny returned, anxious-faced, to warn the boys that something had happened below. They must not delay an instant, and, mounting their horses forthwith, they started down the mountain-side as rapidly as possible, Deeny riding first, then Harold and Jack and last the rag-tag soldier on the jangling mule with the picture apparatus.

"Say, Sandy," questioned McGregor, "does

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Deeny know what the trouble is? Has he any idea?"

Harold shook his head gloomily, and they rode on in silence, thinking of Dr. Evans's apprehensions. Was this the sinister happening that the missionary had feared?

A turn in the path presently brought them to a point of ground whence they could overlook the broad valley beneath them, and now they discovered that, during their absence, Lieutenant Cherik's party had moved forward about a quarter of a mile, and were waiting at a bridge that crossed a rapid stream. Harold raised his field-glasses and made out plainly his father, the lieutenant, and the five soldiers. They were on their mounts in the midst of a group of a dozen horsemen, powerful fellows in picturesque native costume, and all well armed. Dr. Evans was talking to a man with black tassels hanging around his swarthy face, who seemed to be a leader.

Evans rode ahead and consulted with Deeny, who nodded reassuringly.

"I guess it's all right, Jack," explained Sandy. "They belong to one of these Lebanon mountain tribes. Remember? Father told us about 'em."

"He called 'em scoundrels—cutthroats."

THE GREAT HIGHWAY

“Not all of ’em. Deeny says these fellows probably just want to be paid something for letting us go through their territory.”

It turned out that Nasr-ed-Din was correct in this opinion, and all would have gone well with the travelers but for one unfortunate occurrence. As the boys rode up, Dr. Evans had just arranged, after much bargaining, that the party should pay these mountaineers ten Turkish liras (something over forty dollars) for a safe passage through this robber-infested region.

“I have seven liras here,” explained the missionary, clinking some gold in his hand. Lieutenant Cherik contributed five and I had two myself, but these fellows won’t take paper money, so we need three more liras.”

“I’ve got it,” volunteered McGreggor.

“No, you don’t,” laughed Harold. “This is on me. I’m in luck not to owe you a lot more than three liras. Here!” he took out his purse, and, selecting three shining pieces, handed them to the leader.

With a greedy smile the tasseled mountaineer received the gold, and was just lifting his hand in respectful salute, as if to say that the travelers might now proceed on their journey, when suddenly his eyes fell upon Harold’s ring.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

"*It sin!*" ("You dog!") he cried angrily, and seizing the boy's wrist, he studied the brown seal with fierce suspicion. Then, spitting scornfully toward the stone, he thrust Harold violently from him, and, turning to his followers, gave them quick orders in a cruel, rasping voice.

An hour later the Americans, closely guarded, found themselves climbing the rugged heights along the shoulder of Mount Hermon. Now they were prisoners indeed, their every move watched by stern captors alike indifferent to threats and pleadings. And this tragic change in their fortunes had come about through the agency of the very ring that had saved them so wonderfully a few days before.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A PAIR OF DARK EYES

NOW things were going badly again. Not only had the boys fallen into the hands of enemies, but they found themselves cut off from Dr. Evans and Deeny, who, for some reason, were kept under separate guard. As to Lieutenant Cherik and his soldiers, they were set contemptuously at liberty by the mountaineers, after being deprived of weapons, money, and horses. These Lebanon raiders evidently had small respect for Turkish authority.

There followed for the young Americans five hours of painful climbing up steep and dangerous ways where none but a Syrian horse, sure-footed as a goat, could carry his rider. And, to make matters worse, it presently began to rain.

“A nice hole we ’re in,” grumbled Jack, as his mount slipped and stumbled over the rocks. “That’s a wonderful ring of yours,—I don’t think. You’d better give it to a museum.”

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

"We'll be glad to have this ring when we get to Damascus," insisted Harold.

"Huh! When we get to Damascus! When we get to the moon! Whoa, there! I'll go skating down this mountain in a minute! Ugh! it's cold!"

It was nearly midnight when the boys reached an encampment of black tents, seen dimly through the night, and were led to rough bunks on which they threw themselves, sad and weary, and wet to the skin.

"I wish I knew what they've done with Father and Deeny," said Evans anxiously.

"Probably put 'em in another tent," suggested Jack.

The next morning Harold awoke with an aching body, a stiff neck, and such a sore throat that he could not speak above a whisper. McGregor, who was none the worse for his exposure, came loyally to his friend's assistance.

"I'll find your father and get him in here," he said cheerfully. "He'll fix you up in no time."

Jack bustled to the door of the tent, but was stopped unceremoniously by a keen-eyed guard in a blue-embroidered jacket, who stood outside, leaning on a long rifle. The boy made vigorous signs that his friend in the tent was ill.

A PAIR OF DARK EYES

“He’s sick, understand? Malade—krank—Sandy!” he called, “what’s the blooming Turkish word for sick?”

“*Khaste!*” answered Evans weakly.

“*Khaste! Khaste!*” repeated Jack to the guard, with expressive gestures; but the blue-jacketed one merely scowled at him, and would neither go himself for assistance nor allow the American to go.

“This is a fine way to treat people!” stormed Jack. “We haven’t had any breakfast, and they’ve taken all our stuff. We haven’t even got dry clothes. Hello!” McGreggor stopped abruptly, and stood staring out through the tent door in evident admiration, while his angry frown disappeared, and an amiable smile took its place.

“What is it? What do you see?” asked Sandy, from his bunk.

“Give you one guess. What is it that wears big gold hoops in its ears, and has melting dark eyes, and—say, she’s looking at me—she *is*—talk about your Maid of Athens ere we part!”

“Jack, be careful!” warned Evans. “If that guard sees you making eyes at a girl—a Turkish girl—”

“He can’t see me. He’s looking at her him-

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

self. Get up, you antelope. I tell you she's a dream."

The cause of this outburst was a girl of about sixteen, who had suddenly appeared outside the tent and whose beauty of face and figure was half revealed through many veils and flowing garments. She stood for a moment, staring wonderingly at the young American; then, with a frightened gesture, she drew her veils and hurried away.

"Bet you seven dollars—no we don't bet any more, but I've got a hunch that she's the chief's daughter," McGreggor rattled on, "and—she's sorry for us, and—we'll get Deeny to talk with her, and she'll intercede with the old man and persuade him to send us in a table d' hôte breakfast and some clothes and—and then we'll start for Damascus."

But alas for Jack's hopes! No breakfast came, and the boys found their spirits drooping as the hours passed and no one paid the slightest attention to their needs. About noon, the guard, with a surly air, gave them a jar of water and some bread in tough flat cakes—nothing else until nightfall, at which time Harold's head was throbbing with pain.

"Have n't got any fever, have you?" Jack

A PAIR OF DARK EYES

asked. "Let's feel your hand. By Jove, it's hot, all right."

"If I could only see Father!" mourned Harold. "He'd give me quinine or something, and I'd be all right in the morning."

The boy lay silent on his rough bed for some moments, then he burst out bitterly, "Oh, if only I had n't worn that ring! If I had only kept it out of sight!"

McGreggor answered comfortingly from the other side of the tent: "It was n't your fault. The ring got us out of a hole the other time, did n't it? It ought to have helped us this time, only—it did n't. Come, now, stop worrying. Let's go to sleep. Maybe things will be better to-morrow."

"I hope so. Good night, old boy."

"Good night."

For an hour they tossed about restlessly, filled with somber thoughts. Harold lived over again in fevered memory the exciting events of recent weeks. It seemed as if he had gone through all that he could bear. He was tired and weak and lonely. If he only knew where his mother was! If he could only speak to his father! Why had these mountaineers separated him from his father? And from Deeny?

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

"Can't you get to sleep, Sandy?" whispered McGreggor. "Still worrying? What about? Tell me."

Evans tried to answer cheerfully. "Oh, nothing special."

"I say, Sandy. Don't forget the chief's daughter. She'll come to the rescue yet. Give her a chance!"

Scarcely had McGreggor spoken these words, when his faith in the unknown mountain girl received startling justification. There came a sound of low voices outside the tent, and, a moment later, Nasr-ed-Din entered softly, carrying a dim lantern and a basket of food, while over his arm were various articles of clothing. The boys sat up in bed and stared at him.

"Did I call the turn?" beamed McGreggor. "Did I?"

In guarded tones the big Turk explained to his young master what had happened. It was really as Jack had fancied. The severity of their imprisonment had been suddenly relieved through the interest of the young girl they had seen, and who was the daughter of one of the leading men of the band. Her name was Zahra.

"Zahra!" repeated Jack, swelling with pride. "Am I a wizard? Talk about your prophets of



Zahra and her father.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

olden days! 'Zahra, the Bedouin's Daughter.'"

"Oh, cork up. Let Deeny go on," reproved Harold.

Zahra, it appeared (just as Jack imagined), on learning from Nasr-ed-Din that one of the young prisoners was ill, had persuaded her father to send them food and clothing, and to allow Nasr-ed-Din to deliver a message from Dr. Evans.

The missionary's message was simply a loving and encouraging word to the boys, with an assurance of his own safety. Harold was to tell Nasr-ed-Din exactly how he felt, and Dr. Evans would send some medicine.

While Harold was describing his symptoms to the old servant, McGreggor went to the tent door and looked out into the night. The stars were shining peacefully, and in the western sky the moon hung like a copper shield over the white crest of the mountains. As Jack appeared, the guard turned away indifferently.

"He's had his orders," reflected the boy. Then he looked at the moon again, and saw that it was surrounded by two greenish circles.

"Sandy," he called, "there are two green circles around the moon."

"Get out!" scoffed Evans.

"Honest, there are! They're as plain as any-

A PAIR OF DARK EYES

thing. And right near us on the left there's a queer little white building with a round top to it. Ask Deeny what it is."

"He says it's the shrine of a great Moslem saint," answered Harold.

"The shrine of a great Moslem saint!" mused Jack; and, for a long time, he stood staring at this white-washed sepulcher on the mountain-side. Deeny went away and came back with medicine, and then went away again; Harold dropped off quietly to sleep, and still John McGreggor stood at the tent door, frowning and finally smiling, over a pretty little problem in tactics that had flashed into his mind there in the light of the green-circled moon.

The next morning, Harold awoke refreshed and quite himself again.

"Hello, Jack," he called. "I'm right as a dollar. Feeling fine."

McGreggor, who was already dressed, hurried to him, lifting a warning finger.

"Sh! You're ill—very ill."

"Ill nothing! I tell you I'm all right. That stuff Father sent was great. What's the matter with you anyway?"

McGreggor sat down at his friend's bedside with an air of profound mystery.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

"Sandy," he said eagerly, "I've got a great idea, an enormous idea."

"Some way to get five meals a day?"

"No, no! I'm not joking. I've found a way to escape—a sure way—if you'll help me."

"A way to escape—from here?"

"Yes, sir. You've had all the big ideas so far on this trip, but I've got one now, and—and—well it's a bird!"

Evans sat up in bed and studied his friend with great interest.

"Deeny and I talked last night about escaping, Jack. He says it can't be done."

"I can do it!"

Sandy shook his head. "These Lebanon fellows have got us watched every minute, and they're keen as hawks."

"I don't care how keen they are."

"They expect to make a lot of ransom money out of us. Deeny says they sent off a courier to Damascus yesterday morning on a swift camel. He watched him speeding like the wind across the plain."

"Fine!" exclaimed McGreggor. "That means waiting here until the courier gets back. How many days will it take him?"

A PAIR OF DARK EYES

“Three or four, Deeny says. Go on. What’s your idea?”

“Just a minute. Hear that?” Jack hurried to the door as a harsh wailing chant sounded



Speeding to Damascus on a swift camel.

from near by. “Ah! I thought so. I’m beginning to know a few things myself. Look there!”

Harold followed his friend to the opening of the tent.

“That’s nothing; those are Turkish pilgrims—saying their prayers,” he said.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

“Saying their prayers before that shrine of the Moslem saint. Am I right?”

“Well, what of it?”

“What of it? Look at ’em! Look at those chaps on the camels! And that tall fellow with the bare feet standing on the prayer rug! And the other one kneeling by the water-bottle! They believe in miracles at these shrines, don’t they?”

“Yes, I guess so.”

“You know they do, Sandy.”

“All right; what if they do?”

“We ’re going to have a miracle for the special benefit of these Lebanon fellows?”

“A miracle? How do you mean?”

“I ’ll show you. In the first place, we ’re going to have this tent moved along so it ’s close to the shrine. The chief’s daughter will fix that if she hears you are very ill, and want to be near the shrine. Deeny can persuade her to do that. That ’s why I want you ill, see?”

“I don’t see how any of this helps us to escape,” objected Sandy.

“You ’ll see in a minute. Did you hear me mention last night that the moon had two green circles around it? That ’s a sign—understand? A tremendous sign.”



Pilgrims praying at shrine.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

“Rats!”

“Deeny can tell these brigands that it ’s a sign, can’t he? It *is* a sign of something—rain, perhaps. They ’ll swallow it whole, sure they will. Especially the ones that guard our tent, and tomorrow night, at twelve o’clock precisely, we ’ll have ’em all rounded up before that shrine. Understand?”

Harold reflected a moment, and then shook his head disapprovingly. “It ’ll never work, Jack. Never in the world. I can see how our guards might be fooled into leaving us for a few minutes, but what if they did? We ’d never have time to get away. They ’d come right back again.”

“No, sir. They ’ll never come back. They ’ll never stop running, they ’ll be so scared.”

“What ’s going to scare ’em?”

“The thing they ’ll see at the shrine—the miracle.”

“Who ’s going to work this miracle?”

“I am, that is—” Jack paused and a broad grin spread over his face. “Tell you what I ’ll do, Sandy. If you ’re real good, I ’ll let you turn the handle.”

“Turn the handle?” For a moment Evans did

A PAIR OF DARK EYES

not understand, and Jack watched him with keen enjoyment.

"Yep. The handle that 's going to make der-ishes dance and pilgrims pray and the whole caravan circus move along that white-washed wall."

Now the light burst upon Harold.

"Moving pictures!" he cried.

Jack nodded. "Moving pictures at midnight—on the sacred shrine from our tent. Say, can you beat it?"

Harold shook his head doubtfully. "You can't do it. You have n't got your films developed."

"I've got the stuff to develop 'em, have n't I? Bought it in Nazareth, did n't I?"

"I know, but—"

"Maybe I'm not an expert at this. I did n't know anything about kites, did I? Say, how long do you think it'll take me to develop that caravan film? A week? A month? If I don't do it in two hours—right in this tent—I'll eat it."

"You have n't got a machine to throw the pictures."

Jack smiled condescendingly. "No? What do you suppose is packed in those boxes I've been

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lugging around? Prunes? Spelling-books? Why, that was part of my original scheme—to make money showing the pictures—sure it was—to Chinamen, or Zulus, or Eskimos, or anybody—going around the world. That's why I got a stereopticon light-weight attachment with a portable calcium-oxygen outfit—cost me thirty-five dollars.”

“You mean to tell me you can develop the film, and set up the apparatus, and show that caravan picture—to-morrow night?”

“Easy—if I get those boxes. And we'll get 'em, if the gentle Zahra says so—*which she will*. Now let's hustle. Tell that guard you want to talk to Deeny. And he'll talk to the girl; he'll fix it.”

“Wait!” objected Sandy. “Even if you do show the pictures, these Arabs are n't fools—they'll get on to it.”

“Not in a million years. Did n't your father say they're the most ignorant and superstitious people on earth? They don't know how to read. They've never heard of Roosevelt! They've got no more idea what a moving picture is than—did n't your father tell us how they hang blue beads on their babies and horses to keep off the evil eye?”

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“They ’ll see the light of the lantern—out of our tent.”

“They ’ll never look at our tent. They ’ll have their backs to it—kneeling before the shrine.”

“They ’ll hear the click of the machine.”

“Not on your life. They ’ll be howling so loud, they won’t hear anything. Besides, when the pictures start—on the white tomb of that saint—why, they ’ll be scared to death. I tell you it ’s a cinch! They ’ll run like sheep. Can’t you see ’em running? Can’t you, Sandy?”

CHAPTER XXIX

IN DAMASCUS

AS McGreggor remarked, these Lebanon robbers had never lived on Broadway, nor had they heard of the marvels worked by celluloid film and swift interrupting shutter. Therefore when Jack's moving picture program was carried out the following night (it went through to the letter, without a hitch) and the guards, kneeling devoutly before the saint's tomb, saw shadowy figures of men and women, horses and camels, warriors and dervishes, move, as in life, across the white-washed surface of the shrine, it was as if the earth had opened and released the spirits of the departed. A miracle! An awful portent, and, long before Jack had finished his roll the brigands were tumbling down the mountain side with cries of terror in a mad stampede where everything was forgotten, prisoners, possessions, all but this one overpowering fact that the dead were rising from their graves and the day of Judgment had come.

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The boys were quick to take advantage of this general panic and, gathering up what was most important, they sprang upon horses, hurried forward by the watchful Nasr-ed-Din.

"Where is my father? Father!" shouted Harold, turning anxiously toward the black tents, but the missionary did not answer or appear.

Nasr-ed-Din spoke earnestly to his young master, seemed to argue with him, but Evans shook his head vehemently.

"No, no, no!" he cried.

"What is it? What's the matter?" asked Jack.

"Deeny says we must go on without Father, he says Father wants us to, but I won't do it. I tell you I won't move a step."

At this moment the missionary's voice, clear and strong sounded from one of the tents; "Go! Go, my boy!" he called. "It's our only chance. You *must* go."

What had happened was that the brigand chief, less superstitious than his men, had not gone to pray at the shrine, but had remained in the tent where Dr. Evans was a prisoner and so had prevented the missionary from escaping.

"Come, Sandy, your father knows what is best," urged Jack and, without more ado, he

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struck Evans's horse a sharp blow across the flanks, and a moment later, the boys were dashing after Nasr-ed-Din at break-neck speed among the great Lebanon cedars that lined the mountain slope.

In spite of the darkness, the young Americans, thanks to Nasr-ed-Din's skilful guidance, made the steep descent without accident or pursuit and, just as the day was breaking, they came out upon the broad sandy plain that reaches across to Damascus. They had with them a change of clothing, their revolvers and a very little money. All the rest, including money-belts (taken by the robbers) and picture apparatus, had been left behind in the haste of their departure.

"You've got your old ring anyway," sniffed McGregor. "I hope you're happy."

Evans's face darkened. "How can I be happy with—with my father back there?" he said.

"That's right, old boy. It's tough—no doubt about it. Tough on me, too, losing all that picture stuff."

"Looks as if we've lost about everything we've got in the world," sighed Harold. "Why, we're worse off than when we started."

"That's so. Looks as if our whole scheme has busted up."

IN DAMASCUS

"They 've got our money."

"And our pictures—they 're worth—" Jack was silent a moment, then he added solemnly: "Guess it 's four years of college for me with a pink ribbon on my hat."

For an hour they rode ahead in gloomy silence, then Harold spoke in a different tone.

"Say, Jack, I appreciate all you 've done—sticking to me and—Father—through all this trouble."

McGreggor answered with an effort at gaiety: "Trouble? Why I 've had the time of my life. Never had so much fun since I left school. Only it 's spoiled me for Chicago. I 'll have to hire somebody to hold me up and shoot at me once in a while or I won't feel at home."

The sun came up over the plain in a glory of color and, as the fresh beauty of the morning flashed about them, the boys felt again in their breasts the glow of health and youth.

"After all it 's good to be alive on a day like this—in a place like this! Eh, Jack!" remarked Harold.

"Sure! Say this sunrise business gets me. And a horse! They 're so strong—under you—are n't they? Notice how I sit straight on him and grip him with my knees? Come on! I 'll race you."

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With a cluck of the tongue and a backward kick, McGreggor was off on a run with Harold after him. Side by side they raced ahead over the vast plain until Nasr-ed-Din shouted to them to desist.

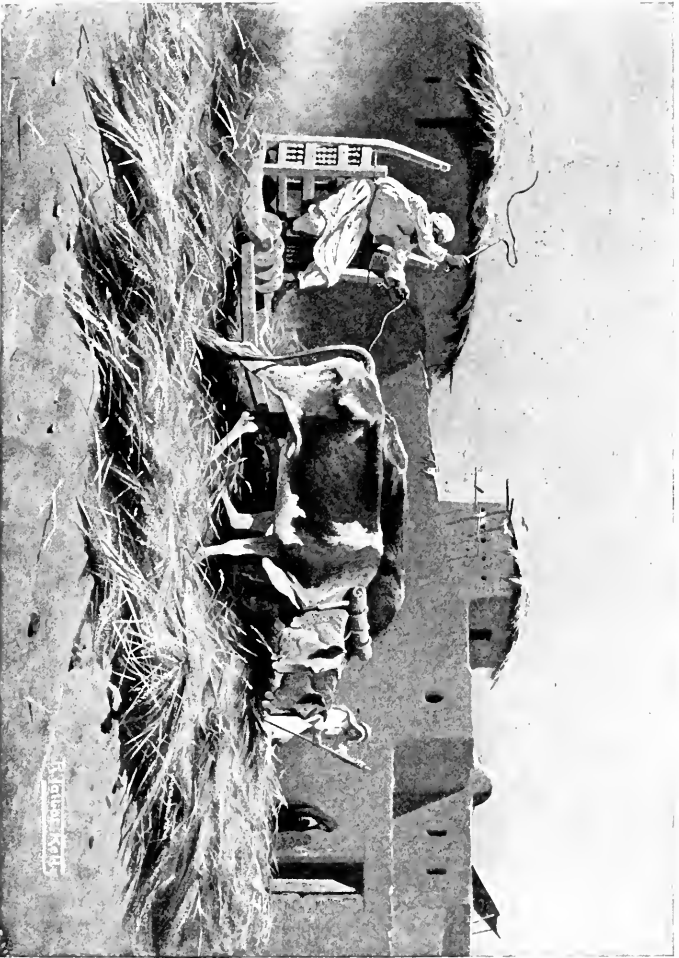
“Is n’t it wonderful!” panted Evans, as they drew in their steaming horses.

Half an hour later they came to a village of low mud houses and from a peasant who was threshing out his grain with a patient bullock—round and round on the threshing floor exactly as in Bible times—they bought for breakfast a dish of the native sour milk with bread and delicious grapes—all for a few piasters. Then they rested for a couple of hours in the shade of some olive trees.

“It ’s funny,” reflected Harold, as they started on, “I feel a lot better than I did. We ought to be sad, but—”

“Must be these grapes,” laughed McGreggor, who was still eating. “Say, would n’t it be great if we could buy such grapes in Chicago for a cent a pound?”

It may be that Jack partook too freely of these delicious purple clusters or perhaps it was the long ride across the parched and burning plain, at any rate, towards evening, he complained of



Threshing grain as in Bible times.

H. J. L. K. M. P.

THE LAND OF MYSTERY

feeling badly and in the night (which they passed in a wretched hovel of another mud village) he had a violent chill.

McGreggor smiled weakly as Harold bent over him in concern. "Afraid it 's my turn to be laid up, old boy. Don't know what 's the matter with me, but—I feel like—well, I never felt worse in my life."

Jack's distress continued and, when morning came, he found himself so weak that he could scarcely sit upon his horse. Nor could he eat a mouthful.

"Deeny says we 're not far from Damascus," said Evans encouragingly, "so if you can only stick it out for a few hours—"

"Of course I 'll stick it out," answered Jack and, shutting his teeth with dogged determination, he rode on under the scorching Syrian sun.

Two hours later they reached the crest of a barren hill (it was near this point that Paul on his historic journey is said to have been converted) and here there burst upon them a view of that most wonderful and ancient city, the pearl of the East, the emerald of the desert, set in its wide oasis of gardens and orchards, watered by the golden-flowing Barada, that pours its

IN DAMASCUS

fresh mountain life into the sands, so that Damascus may be ever young.

McGreggor brightened at the beauty of this scene and was stirred to real enthusiasm a little later, as they rode along, when there was presented to them a most extraordinary natural phenomenon, a violent thunder storm with heavy rain and vivid zig-zags of lightning that broke over one half of the distant city while the other half, with its domes and minarets, flashed dry and smiling in the sun.

This improvement in Jack's feelings was only temporary, however, and as they entered the outskirts of the city, where the air was heavy with the perfume of orange groves and pomegranate orchards, the boy had no thought for this spread of color and luscious fruit, he had no more strength or buoyancy, but was filled with a sickening sense of helplessness and impending disaster. As Harold watched his companion he recalled with dismay Dr. Evans's prophetic words that John McGregor was to suffer a serious illness in Damascus.

This prophecy was destined to be only too well fulfilled. Jack's illness increased rapidly with symptoms of nausea and fever and, by evening (after they had established themselves in a pleas-



A distant view of Damascus, Turkish cemetery in foreground.

IN DAMASCUS

ant little inn, built around a flowering courtyard and flashing fountain) the boy's condition was so alarming that Harold called in the inn-keeper, a voluble Greek named Dmitri who insisted upon summoning a doctor.

Now began an anxious time for Harold, a period of three weeks that was worse than anything he had suffered on the whole journey. His friend was stricken with one of the bad fevers that infest the Syrian coast and often penetrate inland. Days must pass before Jack would be out of danger and weeks before he could be moved. Meantime he must have careful nursing with a doctor in daily attendance. Fortunately this doctor was a Scotchman named MacDonald, a cheery little man with bald head and twinkling blue eyes, who, when he learned that the boys were in financial trouble, refused to take a penny for his services, especially from a patient bearing a name so honored among Highlanders as McGregor.

Sandy's first move the next morning was to make inquiries about Abdul Pasha, his father's devoted friend, whose influence was now to work wonders for them, as soon as he should behold the precious ring that had been brought here with so much difficulty. Alas for these bright

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hopes! Within an hour Harold learned (from no less a person than the American Consul) that this once rich and powerful nobleman had fallen into serious disfavor with the ruling Turkish party and a few months before Abdul Pasha had been arrested on a charge of treason and condemned to prison. His great possessions had been confiscated and he himself was now languishing in a dungeon at Alexandretta.

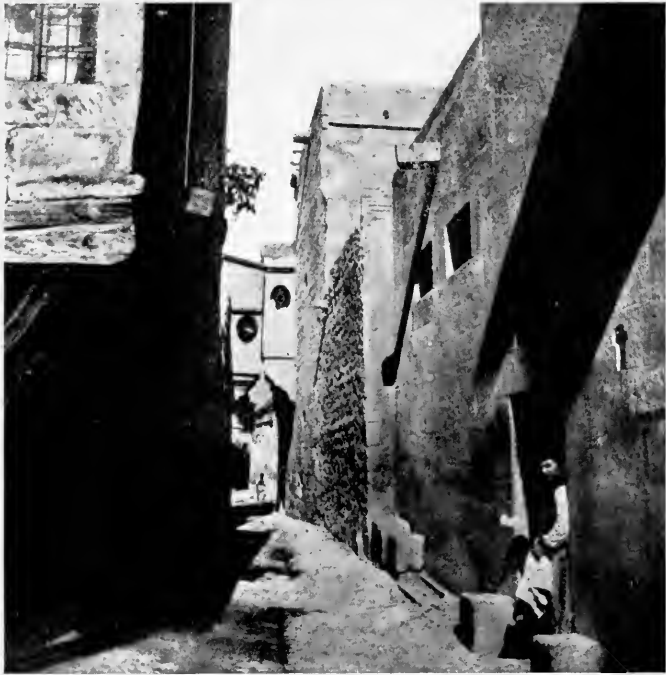
This was a terrible blow to Harold, but he resolved to keep the bad news from Jack, at least until he was strong enough to bear it.

Meantime, by husbanding their little store of gold, the boy was able to meet the expenses of the first week, just barely, and, for the second week the faithful Nasr-ed-Din found, somehow, what was necessary; but, after that, the situation loomed black before them. What could they do? The inn-keeper must be paid. Food must be provided, in fact the sick boy must have delicacies and expensive medicines. And their money was gone—to the last shilling.

These were days when Sandy Evans had need of all his courage. For hours he would walk through the narrow and crooked streets of this picturesque city, then out along the high mud walls that border teeming orchards of apricots,

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plums, peaches, walnuts and oranges. And all the time as he idly watched the squirrels and lis-



Narrow street in Damascus.

tened to the woodpeckers, he would be thinking what he could do to save the situation. What could he do? He *must* do something, but what? If he could only have taken counsel with Jack,

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but the doctor's orders forbade this—Jack must not be troubled under any circumstances—his fever was at its crisis now and much of the time the poor lad was in delirium.

So the responsibility rested on Harold alone. Should he go to the American Consul and ask for help, laying the whole case before him? More than once he was on the point of doing this, but desisted when he recalled his mother's command that he keep their troubles secret from the authorities, lest greater troubles come. Evans remembered also that Basil had given him a similar warning and he found himself beset by fears, especially at night, when he thought of the powerful and unknown enemies who had struck at his father and his mother and might now, at any moment, strike at himself and his sick friend. No doubt it was these same enemies who had seized Abdul Pasha and cast him into prison. If they could so wreak their vengeance upon a rich nobleman, a native of the country, what might they not do to two boys, strangers and defenseless?

So from day to day Harold waited, facing their trouble alone, hoping, praying that some way out of their difficulties might be shown to him. He felt sure that some way would be shown to him—it was unbelievable that all the faith and brave

IN DAMASCUS

efforts of his father and mother, all their good works through years should go for nothing and that God would desert them now in their greatest need. Morning and night the boy knelt down and asked for guidance and light, asked that his faith might be strengthened like his mother's faith and his father's faith so that nothing could stand against it. Many times his mother had assured him, with a beautiful light in her eyes, that faith could move mountains and, as he thought over recent events, as he remembered the pyramid, the catacombs and Mar Saba, Sandy saw how true this was—the mountains had indeed moved to deliver them from evil—and he prayed with all his soul for this wonderful faith that would make the mountains move again.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MOUNTAINS MOVE

AT the end of the third week Dr. McDonald pronounced Jack out of danger and entered upon his convalescence, but said that the boy must not think of leaving the inn for a fortnight. And he must have tempting food, anything that appealed to his appetite so that his strength might be built up quickly. This prescription pleased McGreggor immensely and he proceeded to order the most expensive things on the bill of fare, roast partridge twice a day and ice-cream without limit. Poor boy, he had no idea that they were already hopelessly indebted to Dmitri who was giving them their last days of grumbling credit at the persuasion of the doctor.

“Say, old boy,” Jack broke out suddenly one evening after finishing his second partridge, “it’s just struck me that—we must be spending a lot of money here? How do we work it? I thought we were broke?”

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“Why—er,” answered Sandy trying to smile, “you see I—oh, I’ve just managed.”

“Just managed? Say, you’re a wonder! Here I’ve been living like a prince of the blood—I never *tasted* such partridges.” He was silent a moment, then a broad grin spread over his face. “Oh, I know! I see! Clever boy! You’ve worked that magic ring again—seen his nobs Abdul what’s-his-name and made him cough up. Am I right?”

“Abdul Pasha? Well—er—I went to his house,” admitted Sandy, evading the question for the moment. He did not wish to make Mc-Gregor unhappy, but he felt that their prodigal period of roast partridge and ice-cream was about over.

Evans went out for a walk in a desperate mood. A glimpse of the inn-keeper’s frowning face made it clear that something must be done immediately to avert serious consequences and Harold was considering the advisability of cabling for assistance to Jack’s father, even at the risk of revealing the whole truth to the authorities, when suddenly—

“Hello,” he said to himself and stood staring before him. He had turned into the famous ‘Street-that-is-called-Straight’ (which is really

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not straight at all) and immediately he saw over an imposing door-way two flags on which fluttered two formidable black eagles. Black eagles! As Harold moved on he came to other flags flying from windows and house-tops and bearing, each one of them, the same grim emblem. Black eagles over the wide bazaars where cross-legged Moslems cry their silks and sword blades! Black eagles on the walls of the city whence Paul descended in a basket! Black eagles before the leper hospital where once stood the house of Naaman! Black eagles at the doors of the great mosque where the head of John the Baptist, so they say, is preserved in a golden casket.

What did it mean—all these black eagles? What did it mean for him? The boy walked back to the inn, stunned by the strangeness of this happening. His father, under the olive tree, had seen black eagles in Damascus—here they were! His father, under the olive tree, had seen John McGregor ill in Damascus—it was true! These eagles were a sign—for him—there was no mistaking it—a sign connected with his mother. But what was the meaning of this sign? What must he do?

Through much of the following night Harold

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thought and prayed and, towards the dawn, a great peace possessed him. He *knew* that everything was coming out right, he did not know *how* he knew this, but he fell asleep in the firm confidence that the hour of their deliverance was at hand. He was soon to see his father and his mother—he *knew* it.

Evans was awakened, a few hours later, by a blare of trumpets outside his windows, and, presently, a long line of Turkish soldiers in gala dress of red and blue came marching past to the inspiring music of a military band. After them came a splendid cavalry company in green and gold on snow white horses, then another company on black horses, then more foot soldiers and another military band.

“Say, what’s broken loose, Sandy?” asked Jack, who had hobbled in his pajamas to see the show. “What are all those flags with black eagles on ’em for?”

“Guess they’re celebrating your recovery, old boy,” laughed Evans. He was quite happy because he knew their troubles were at an end.

A little later Harold set forth in the eager and trusting spirit of a child who has been promised something wonderful, but has no idea what the

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wonderful something is, nor where nor how it is to come.

The whole city had put on holiday attire, flags were flying everywhere, soldiers parading everywhere, and the streets were crowded with people



Turkish cavalry.

wearing all the costumes of the East and chattering excitedly about some great event that had evidently inspired them with pride and joy. A chance meeting with Dr. McDonald, near the house of Ananias, the high priest, gave Evans a key to the mystery.

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Arrival of the Emperor.

“Don’t you know what this is?” said the doctor. “Did n’t they tell you? Why, the Emperor is here—just arrived this morning. He’s go-

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ing to hold a grand reception and he leaves tomorrow for Baalbec.”

For a moment Harold thought the doctor was referring to the Turkish Emperor, the Sultan, but he presently understood that it was a far greater ruler than he who had honored Damascus with his presence. This was the great Christian Emperor, the most powerful potentate of Europe, who, with much pomp and ceremony, was making a tour of the Holy Land. It was in his honor that black eagles were flying over Damascus.

Harold could hardly speak for emotion. The great Emperor! He thanked the doctor and hurried along, his head in a whirl. And yet he understood what was before him. It was clear enough now. His mother and his father were to be saved somehow by this Emperor. But how? The Emperor could not save them unless he knew all about them and he could not know about them unless Harold told him. So it was evidently necessary that Sandy Evans have a heart to heart talk with the most powerful potentate in Europe.

“Hm!” reflected Harold. “Looks as if I’m getting in with some pretty classy people.”

The more he pondered this the more Evans felt that here was his only chance. They were liter-

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ally at the end of their resources, stranded in a foreign land, without friends, and they were responsible for two precious lives. It might not be according to etiquette for a vagabond boy to call upon an emperor, but this was a case of desperate necessity—let etiquette go hang.

Strong in this resolve, Harold sought out the American Consul and, in a guarded way, explained his desire to have an interview with the Emperor. The American Consul laughed at the boy and showed him the utter absurdity of seeking what had been refused to hundreds of rich and influential persons. The American Consul himself could not get an interview with the Emperor, if he were foolish enough to ask for it.

“That’s all right, sir,” said Harold, biting his lips in perplexity, “but”—he took a deep breath and squared his shoulders, “I’m going to get that interview just the same. I’ve *got* to get it.”

By dint of searching and questioning Harold ascertained that the Emperor’s reception was to be held that afternoon between three and four o’clock at the palatial home of the military governor of Damascus whose duty it was, as the Sultan’s representative, to entertain the imperial guest. But when Harold attempted to approach this house he found that the streets leading to it

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were barred by soldiers for a block in either direction. No one was allowed to pass without a personal card or invitation. And these invitations were not to be had for love or money.

Evans went back to the inn and took counsel with Deeny. The big Turk must find some way of gaining admittance for Harold into the house where the Emperor was staying. This was absolutely necessary, the welfare of the whole Evans family depended on it. Nasr-ed-Din saluted solemnly from the eyes, from the lips, from the heart, and went away, bidding the boy wait for him. In serving the interests of the Evans family there was nothing that Nasr-ed-Din would stop at and Harold knew it.

It was about half past one when Deeny left the inn on this delicate and difficult mission and immediately, such was Harold's confidence in a favorable outcome, the boy began to consider what he should wear at his interview with the Emperor. As a matter of fact his choice was sadly limited by the scantiness of their combined wardrobe, but by borrowing a dark coat and a clean shirt from McGreggor and by blackening his tan shoes, Sandy managed to give himself a presentable appearance. As he dressed, with the greatest care, he confided to Jack's astonished

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ears the whole truth touching their bankrupt condition together with his plan for saving the situation. He declared with the utmost confidence that their troubles were practically over.

"But, my dear Sandy, you're crazy," declared McGregor. "You'll never get anywhere near the Emperor. And if you do, they'll chuck you out so fast and so hard that—"

"Wait!" interrupted Evans. "How about that moving-picture scheme? It was your idea, was n't it? And I said it was crazy, did n't I? And it was n't crazy. It was a bully idea. Well?"

"Yes, but an emperor's different, Sandy, the swellest emperor there is—you can't walk in on an emperor like that and say: 'Hello, Emperor, I'm broke,' you can't do it."

"Give me that shirt and I'll show you if I can't do it. Why I'd walk in on *ten* emperors to get my father and my mother back and don't you forget it."

At half past two Nasr-ed-Din returned and, with show of mystery, beckoned Harold to follow him. Jack's eyes opened wide.

"Are you really going to do this thing?" he asked.

"I'm going to try," said Sandy. "If anything

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happens to me—why—you'll have to cable to your father. Good-by, Jack."

McGreggor looked fixedly at his friend and there came into his eyes something suspiciously like moisture.

"Good luck, old boy, and—and—" he choked up with emotion, then he blurted out: "Say, you're the finest, pluckiest fellow I ever knew."

As they passed out into the street Harold asked Nasr-ed-Din to wait a minute while he made a small purchase at a shop next to the inn. It was a pair of gloves, which seemed to him desirable as a last touch to his costume. A boy ought to wear gloves, he reflected, when he meets an emperor and, having selected a pair of bright yellow ones, Sandy asked the shop-keeper, in his grandest manner, to kindly have this trifling bill sent to him at the inn. The shop-keeper bowed respectfully.

Again they set forth but presently it began to rain and Harold sent Deeny back to the inn to borrow an umbrella. A boy *must* keep his clothes dry when he is about to meet an emperor.

Finally they made their real start and Harold found that Nasr-ed-Din had hit upon a very simple way of introducing him into the house where the reception was to take place. Back of this

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house stretched gardens surrounded by high stone walls which at several points abutted against neighboring houses. These latter were built with the customary flat roofs and with stone



Flat Roofs of Turkish houses.

steps on the outside, for Syrian housetops are still used as sleeping places at night and gathering places by day, just as in Bible times. It was, therefore, an easy matter to pass from one roof to another (the houses being close together) and finally reach the gardens of the house where



Deeny lowers Harold over the wall.

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the Emperor was. This being accomplished, Deeny lowered his young master over the wall and, with a final word of caution and a prayer that Allah would bless his purposes, left the boy to work out his own salvation.

For a few moments Harold paused in the shelter of a friendly sycamore-tree and smoothed out the disorder of his garments, then, mustering all his courage, he advanced towards the house.

It happened that at this moment the guests were arriving rapidly so that the courtyard was well filled and, as the gardens opened directly into this courtyard, Evans presently found himself in a gathering of important personages of many nationalities who had been bidden to the ceremony and who paid not the slightest attention to this young American, owing to the fact that they were all more or less flustered at the ordeal before them. This was the first time, in the memory of the oldest dignitary, that Damascus had been honored by the visit of a European sovereign.

The courtyard was of white marble and at one side, under a golden canopy, rose broad steps covered with crimson carpet and flanked by golden standards bearing black eagles. Harold

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A rich house in Damascus.

saw that the company were slowly ascending these steps and, following along, he came into a great white and gold room hung with red curtains.

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In this room perhaps forty or fifty men were waiting while others streamed in constantly from the courtyard. Many of them wore gorgeous uniforms with swords at their sides, some were in evening dress with red and blue sashes across their shirt fronts and glistening stars and medals pinned upon their breasts. These were the representatives of great European powers, but there were some in plain black coats and there were many white-turbaned Orientals in flowing and flaming garments. All of these were moving along in a single line that was feeding on steadily towards a slightly raised platform (guarded by black eagles) upon which a man of kingly mien was standing.

Harold's heart almost stopped as he realized that he was actually in the presence of the Emperor. And it came to him with a shock that he was carrying a cheap cotton umbrella, dripping with rain. In an agony of embarrassment the boy looked about him and, perceiving an immense porcelain vase that stood five feet above the floor, he edged over to it and, choosing his moment, he slipped the despised umbrella into this costly receptacle and left it there. The innkeeper who had loaned it might charge it on his bill.

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Relieved of this incumbrance and pleased with the effect of his yellow gloves, Harold now took his place at the end of the line and awaited developments. Directly in front of him was a little Austrian in a brown wig who was really an important railway administrator but did not look important. Harold breathed more easily. Nothing had happened to him yet.

As the line advanced Evans began to plan what he should say when he reached the emperor. How would he begin? Should he say "Sire" or "Your majesty," or "Your imperial highness" or what? He must say something to create a good impression, for of course the emperor would not know him. What should he say?

With anxious eyes Sandy studied the line ahead of him, hoping to find some suggestion in the behavior of the others; but, as far as he could see, all that they did was to bend over the emperor's extended hand and kiss it with mumbled words and pass on. Harold knew that, when his turn came, he must do more than this. But what?

The line moved on and now the young American was only twenty places from the emperor. He could see the ruler's eyes flashing with stern dignity and suddenly the boy's heart sank. He

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saw that he was in a false position—he was an intruder, who had stolen in here like a thief and—he might be taken for a spy or an anarchist—he might be put in prison.

The line moved on and Harold's eyes were fixed defiantly on two burly guards who might at any moment, he realized, be ordered to seize him. Very well, let them try it. He had done nothing he was ashamed of and, after all, he was an American citizen. He would hold his head high and, whatever happened, he would *not* kiss the Emperor's hand. No sir! They could throw him out or do what they pleased to him, but when it came to kissing a man's hand—

At this moment Harold realized that the brown-wigged Austrian before him was bobbing up and down most comically and a second later the young American found himself in the great presence—face to face with the Emperor.

Just how things happened after this Harold could never exactly remember. He spoke in English, and came forward like the boy on the burning deck with such a look in his eyes, at once brave and pleading, that this august ruler of millions (who had been excessively bored by the proceedings) was immediately interested.

“You're an American?” asked the Emperor in

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perfect English with a quizzical smile at the half defiant young face.

“Yes, your—your honor,” stumbled Harold. “My father is a missionary—Wicklow Evans—he’s in terrible trouble and—my mother—in Cairo—she was stolen away and—I came here to see Abdul Pasha but—” He was crowding as much as he could into the first sentence.

“Not so fast! You say your father is Wicklow Evans—the missionary who disappeared?”

“Yes, your majesty, but we found him at Mar Saba only—we were captured and—I had a ring and—then we scared ’em with a moving-picture machine and—”

Here the governor of the city, purple-faced at this audacity, stepped forward quickly and checked the boy’s tumbling words. One glance showed Harold what his fate might be if this angry official decided it.

“Sire, this fellow is an impostor. He has no right here. We will take him away,” cried the governor, but the Emperor waved him back. This was an amusing diversion, besides the great protestant sovereign was well informed touching the tragic mystery of Wicklow Evans. And there was such compelling honesty and fearless-

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ness in this boy's face that even the great ruler of men felt a thrill of admiration.

"Let him wait in the next room," was the imperial order, then to Harold: "I believe you're an honest lad. I will hear your story when these people have gone."

The look that accompanied these words was so encouraging that Harold's heart bounded with joy, then his face flushed in shame as he remembered that he had come into this splendid presence with arrogance and suspicion. He had refused to kiss the Emperor's hand and now this great ruler, instead of having him thrown out and punished, as he had a perfect right to do, had been kind to him and protected him.

"I'm a cheeky little fool," thought Sandy. "I ought to be kicked. I—I—" Then, in a swift surging of gratitude, he resolved that now he *would* kiss the Emperor's hand. "I'll kiss it if it—if it's the last thing I do," and, straightway, the boy made an awkward duck of the head in this intention, but the Emperor stopped him.

"No, my young friend," he smiled. "In America you don't believe in that sort of thing. Come, we'll shake hands." Whereupon the greatest autocrat on earth gave Sandy Evans his hand in a strong and friendly clasp.



Harold meets the Emperor.

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Half an hour later the Emperor heard Harold's story, listened to every detail of this mysterious chronicle from the moment of Dr. Evans's disappearance the year before, and he marveled at the spiritual power that had brought these things to pass. Also he was stirred to righteous anger at the cruelty and wickedness of the Old Turk party that had taken such desperate steps to stop the spread of Christianity in the Adana region. Swift orders followed Harold's revelation. Jack McGregor was questioned, Nasr-ed-Din was questioned and, before night, at the sovereign's peremptory command, cable messages in the state cipher were flashing to the Sultan in Constantinople, were flashing to the Khedive in Cairo, while a picked company of soldiers were speeding over the plain toward the robber's haunt in the Lebanon. Wicklow Evans and all his belongings was to be brought to Damascus immediately and let any one beware who harmed a hair of his head—this by order of the governor of Damascus, who was himself in a frenzy of fear.

That is about all there is to say. Ten days later (so swiftly do things happen when the rulers of the earth really wish them to happen),

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there was another reception at the governor's house and this time the guest of honor was an American missionary honored the world over, Wicklow Evans. At his side stood Harold and Jack and Nasr-ed-Din and before them, with respectful salutations, passed the notables of Damascus, including the American consul, Dr. MacDonald, and Dmitri, the inn-keeper, vastly pleased over the settlement in full (by the governor) of his little bill—for roast partridges, ice-cream and other things.

And presently, after the guests had departed, the governor himself drew aside the red curtains (the black eagles had long since flown away to their native capitol) and, with ceremonious bow, ushered in the sweet lady, trembling with joy, whose radiant faith had made these things possible.

“Mother!” cried Harold.

“Mary!” exclaimed Dr. Evans.

“My husband! My boy!” she murmured and John McGreggor declared afterwards that a moving-picture of this scene would have been worth five hundred dollars—easy.

After the first excitement of reunion came a torrent of questions. Where had Mrs. Evans been all this time? Had she been treated cruelly?

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Where was she hidden that day at the pyramid when she telegraphed to the boys through the rock? Had she been able to see them at that moment? How had she been rescued?

The explanation was very simple. Mrs. Evans had been in Cairo, a prisoner, although kindly treated. She had been set at liberty on orders from "higher up." When first taken, that day at the pyramid, she had telegraphed to the boys from a rock tomb whence she could see them, although she dared not cry out. As to her experiences, no one had wished to do Mrs. Evans any bodily harm. It was the fanatical spirit of the Old Turks (as distinguished from the more advanced attitude of the Young Turk party which included enlightened men like Abdul Pasha), that had sought to dim and smother the light of the Gospel by preventing this determined woman from carrying on her work at Adana. Since she and her husband could not be frightened into abandoning the missionary field they would be *forced* to abandon it—this was the Moslem purpose.

"They treated me well enough," said Mrs. Evans. "I had a small apartment to myself with servants to wait on me and a garden to walk in, but—I was a prisoner. I might have gone free

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at any time if I would have promised to go back to America and stay there, but, of course—”

“My brave wife!” murmured Wicklow Evans.

“I call that pretty good nerve,” admired McGregor. “Say, you ought to tell your adventures—in vaudeville. You could make—”

“Jack! You goat!” reproved Harold.

“They could—they could make a thousand dollars a week—with our moving-pictures—easy.”

Mrs. Evans laughed happily. “It would be nice to make all that money, but we have other plans—have n’t we, dear?” she turned joyfully to her husband.

“Yes,” said the missionary gravely. “The Turkish authorities have offered us a handsome indemnity for what we have suffered. They request that we return to America, but they do not refuse us the privilege of continuing our work at Adana, if we go there at our own risk. That part of Asia Minor is much disturbed just now, and there is danger of fresh massacres. What do you think we ought to do, Harold?”

“Yes, what do you think we ought to do, my boy?” asked the mother.

Harold looked at her fondly, proudly, then at his father. “It does n’t matter what I think,” he answered. “I *know* what you’re going to do

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and—I guess it 's right. You 're going to play the game out and take chances on what comes."

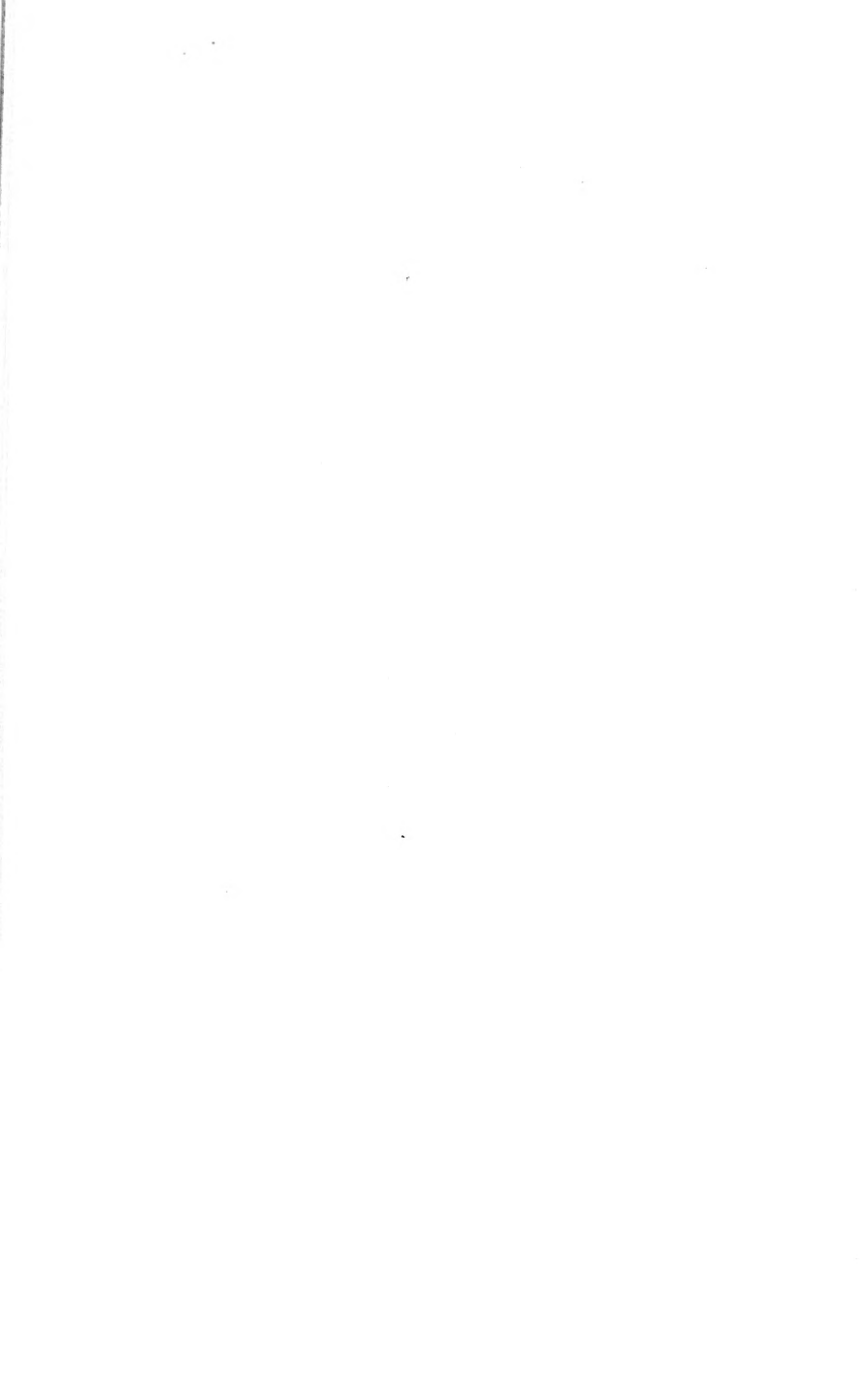
"Massacres or no massacres," added Jack thoughtfully.

"You 're going back to Adana!" said Sandy Evans.

"Yes, my son, we 're going back to Adana."

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THE END



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